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THE

THEORY OF PREACHING

LECTURES ON HOMILETICS

BY

AUSTIN PHELPS, D.D.

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PREFACE.

Two methods of discussion are practicable to an instructor in homiletics. They are called, not very accurately, the *practical* and the *scientific* methods. These terms are open to the objection, that, on a theme like this, a scientific treatise must be infirm, if it is not also practical; and a practical treatise must be equally infirm, if it is not also scientific.

Yet these terms do convey a hint of the elements which preponderate in the two modes of discussion. By the one, homiletics is treated chiefly as a science, and is developed chiefly by scientific analysis, and in its relation to kindred sciences. The resulting treatise is valuable to a student mainly as a means of mental discipline. It would be formed, ultimately, on the model of Aristotle's system of rhetoric. By the other method, homiletics is treated, not unscientifically indeed, yet with regard chiefly to its practical uses. The German theologians, with greater accuracy of terms than that of our American nomenclature, consider it a branch of "practical theology." Such it undoubtedly is. Thus defined and developed, it would form a treatise valuable to a student chiefly as a practical guide and help to the

work of the pulpit. The one of these methods of treatment is the more apt to the study of the *science* for the purpose of liberal culture only: the other is the more necessary to the study of the *art* in a professional seminary.

For reasons quite obvious, I have chosen the second of the two methods here indicated, in the construction of the present volume. Very soon after I began to lecture in the department, I formed the habit of preserving manuscript notes of the inquiries of students in the lecture-room and in private conversations. Those notes soon grew upon my hands immensely. Answers to those inquiries constitute nine-tenths of this volume. Whatever value my work may possess is due largely to the fact that it is a *growth* from such practical resources, suggested by practical minds, eager in their youthful outlook upon the most practical of the liberal professions, approaching it with intensely practical aims, and prompt to put the instructions they might receive to immediate practical uses. It would have been difficult to engage such hearers with any enthusiasm in listening to a purely scientific treatise, orally delivered, on such a theme. Of all subjects for the lecture-room, literary criticism pure and simple is the most inert. It must fall flat, even from the lips of genius.

I have carried the subordination of scientific to practical inquiry so far, that I have often used the analysis of a sermon as a line of suggestion to which to attach matter of practical moment related to the theory of preaching, yet not strictly a part of it. From this liberty of discussion has arisen the feature of *excursus*, which will be observed in the structure of these lectures. In this, also, I have followed the lead of the actual inquiries of my pupils.

By retaining the forms of oral delivery in the publication of this work, I have aimed to make it (though necessarily with large omissions and condensations, especially of illustrative material) as nearly as possible an exact transcript of the work of my lecture-room. As such it is offered, with very kindly recollections, to those who are still living of the more than twelve hundred students, who, in the course of thirty-one years, have given me their patient and attentive hearing; of whom I gratefully record the fact, that not a solitary exception has ever given me occasion for rebuke or admonition.

While thus constructed primarily for professional readers, this volume will be found to contain much, I hope, which will be of interest to thoughtful laymen. My hearers in the lecture-room will bear me witness that I have never lost sight of that large and increasing portion of our laity who have very pronounced ideas of their own of the true theory of preaching, however little they may know or care for its scientific forms. I have recognized the fact that to their experienced judgment my own work must be ultimately submitted in the life's work of my students; and that no theory of a sermon can be worth discussion, which does not succeed in adjusting preaching, as a practical business, to the large common sense of Christian hearers.

It is due to Professor M. Stuart Phelps that I should acknowledge his vigilant and scholarly aid in the revision of my manuscript, especially in making the necessary eliminations of material, and in otherwise editing the present work.

ANDOVER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
March, 1881.

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THE

THEORY OF PREACHING:

LECTURES ON HOMILETICS.

LECTURE I.

THE SERMON: ITS GENERIC IDEA.

HOMILETICS is the science which treats of the nature the classification, the analysis, the construction, and the composition of a sermon. More concisely it is the science of that of which preaching is the art, and a sermon is the product. What, then, is the relation of homiletics to rhetoric? Homiletics *is* rhetoric, as illustrated in the theory of preaching. Rhetoric is the genus: homiletics is the species.

I. What is the generic idea of a sermon? It may be expressed in cumulative form in the following theses.

1st, A sermon is an *oral address.* It is something distinct from an essay or a book. If well constructed, it has peculiarities of structure adapting it to oral delivery, and in some respects unfitting it for private reading. In this respect a sermon illustrates the radical idea of all true eloquence. It must be conceded to the advocates of exclusively extemporaneous preaching, that the extemporaneous ideal is the true one of

perfect public speech. A perfect orator would never write: he would always speak. The mutual magnetism between speaker and hearer would bear him on, without the aid of manuscript or memory. The custom of preaching written discourses grows out of mental infirmities. In any form of speech, be it written or oral, we make but an approximation to perfect oratory; and the true policy of the pulpit is to combine the weight of material which the pen commands with the ease, the versatility, the flexible expression, and the quickness of transition which belong to good extemporaneous speech. The ideal sermon aims to blend the qualities of the essay with those of the speech. That is like mingling the properties of a solid and a fluid: but in the paradoxical union, the fluid has always the ascendency. The sermon is a speech before it is any thing else. Nothing else should deprive it of the qualities of speech. The oral elements of a sermon usually grow, in a preacher's estimate, with the growth of his experience. Dr. Archibald Alexander of Princeton abandoned the pen entirely in his later years, when time had given him command of accumulated materials, so that he could always extemporize from a full mind. He once said, that if he were on trial for his life, and his acquittal depended on a single effort of his own, he would trust to his lips rather than to his pen.

2d, A sermon is an oral address *to the popular mind.* It is distinct from a scientific lecture, from a judicial oration, from a harangue to a rabble, from a talk to children. The best test of a good sermon is the instinct of a heterogeneous audience. That is not good preaching which is limited in its range of adaptation to select audiences: be it select intelligence, or select ignorance, it matters not. The pulpit permits no selection. It

exists not for the few, not for the many as distinct from the few, but for all. No other variety of public speech is so cosmopolitan in its freedom from provincial limitations as that of the pulpit. To a good preacher his field is literally the world: it is the world of real life, not the world of books alone, not the world of the streets alone, but the world as it is in its completeness and range of character and station. He finds his audience wherever he finds men and women and children. No order of mind is above him, none beneath him. This popular element in the ideal of a sermon is so fundamental, that it should be incorporated into every definition of the thing.

But is not this a degrading idea of a sermon? Do we not let down the intellectual level of the pulpit by insisting upon its cosmopolitan mission? Is it not, at the best, a condescension of intellect to usefulness, when a preacher addresses his whole life's work to the necessities of promiscuous assemblies? Is it not a nobler thing to do to preach to select hearers, whose culture shall give scope to a preacher's loftiest intellectual aspirations? These queries are fundamental to the usefulness of the pulpit. A false theory respecting it is secretly embarrassing and depressing many a preacher in his life's work. It is a sad thing for a man to labor all his life long under the weight of a conflict between professional usefulness and personal culture. Yet such, if I mistake not, is the secret consciousness of many pastors. In some it amounts to a sense of intellectual degradation. Daniel Webster, in the closing years of his life, expressed a profound sense of personal humiliation in having been, through his whole career, so largely engaged in the delivery of electioneering speeches. If he had followed the bent of his tastes, he would never

have spoken in public outside of the United States Senate or the Supreme Court Room. Something akin to this feeling weighs upon the spirits, and depresses the self-respect, of not a few most useful pastors.

Let us see, then, how this matter stands. Is the popular character of the pulpit, in the Christian ideal of it, degrading to it as a representative of intellect and as a stimulus to intellectual culture?

(1) It must be conceded that the affirmative is sustained by the notions current among many literary men. Multitudes of literary men deny to the pulpit the dignity of literature. In their view, it stands below the level of literary criticism. Nothing else fares so severely at the hands of popular critics, nothing else is criticised so flippantly, nothing else is doomed so often by foregone conclusions, or so surely "damned with faint praise," as a volume of sermons from a living and useful pulpit. We are all infected with this disease of critical judgment in the conceptions which we often mean to express by the phrase "popular preaching." "He is a *popular* preacher," we say, with an inflection which means that this is the least respectable thing about him. "Is he a man of talents?" — "Oh, yes! of *popular* talents. He takes well with the multitude; he draws an audience; women weep, and children listen, when he speaks; he can always be sure of a hearing; but" — and so on. A reverent reader of the Scriptures, it is true, will be reminded of Him whom the common people heard gladly; yet the tone of literary disparagement will linger a long time in our ears, notwithstanding. A positive stiffening of self-respect is often needful, that a pastor may hold his head erect against the flings of criticism. Such criticism is literary cant.

(2) This leads me to observe, that the great excellence of a sermon, considered as a specimen of literature alone, is that it sways mind without distinction of class. So far as this aim is reached, it is, in kind, the grandest thing in literature. To make the deep thoughts of theology intelligible to all orders of mind, and impressive to them all, so that the same truth which instructs the ignorant, and quickens the torpid, shall also move the wisest, and command the most alert, is a masterly work of mind. Not a tithe of the standard literature of the world achieves any thing so profound or so brilliant. Plato could not have done it, but St. Paul did it. The profoundest discoveries of ethical science were made intelligible, and, what is vastly more important, were made regenerating forces of thought in the minds of fishermen, by the Sermon on the Mount. Yet all the philosophy which the world reveres bows before the originality of that sermon to-day. Was there intellectual degradation in that? As much as in the humblest labor of a successful pulpit.

Much to the purpose here is an opinion which Guizot has recorded of the nature of genius. In his criticism of the English drama, he expresses his idea of genius in words which are true, without abatement, of the Christian pulpit. He says, "Genius is bound to follow human nature in all its developments. Its strength consists in finding within itself the means of satisfying the whole of the public. [It] should exist for all, and should suffice at once for the wants of the masses and for the requirements of the most exalted minds." What is this, but preaching the gospel to every creature, becoming all things to all men, doing in the simplicity of faith that which every successful preacher does in the result of his life's work? This, then, we pronounce

the intellectual dignity of the pulpit. Why not, as well as of the drama? Considered as the subject of philosophical criticism, the genius of the pulpit corresponds to the genius of that poetry which is world-wide and immortal. A good sermon is a popular production in the same sense in which a good drama is a popular production. A good preacher is a man of the people in the same sense in which Racine and Shakespeare were men of the people. Any thing which grows out of scholastic culture alone, valuable as it may be, is still below the genius which sways the people from the pulpit, in the same sense in which Aristotle was below Homer, and Locke below Milton.

(3) From this view it follows that the sense of self-denial which preachers sometimes express in adapting their sermons to all classes, instead of ministering to a select intelligence, has no virtue in it. Says one of twenty pastors of like mind, in a private letter, "I am throwing myself away in this shoe-town." Very well. he probably could not make a better throw. If he saves a "shoe-town" morally, he lifts it up intellectually to an immense altitude. In the process of doing that, he lifts his own mind to a level of culture and of power which no conservatism of refinement ever rises high enough to overlook. Do not the first ten inches of an oak from the ground measure as much in height as the last ten of its topmost branch? When will the ministry learn that the place where has very little concern with the intellectual worth of the work done? The uplifting anywhere is essentially the same, but with the chances of success all in favor of lifting low down. To the mind of Christ the whole world is a "shoe-town" intellectually. To give it a lift everywhere is the intellectual glory of the pulpit. Deliver

ance from the pettiness of a select ambition is essential to the power to lift it anywhere. If a man is swaying a promiscuous assembly every week, albeit they have waxed and grimy hands; if he is really moving them, educating them, raising them by the eternal thoughts of God up to the level of those thoughts, he is doing a grander literary work, with more power at both ends of it, than if he were penned in and held down by the *élite* of a city, or the clique of a university. He is plowing a deeper furrow, and subsoiling the field of all culture. The reflex influence of his work upon his own development is more masculine. He is a nobler man for it in intellectual being. There is more of him in the end. He has more to show for his life's work, and more of himself to carry into eternity.

Doddridge speaks with dolorous magnanimity of the effort which it cost him to discard from his style certain words, metaphors, constructions, which his literary taste tempted him to use, but which his conscience rejected as unsuited to the capacities of his hearers. This was mourning the loss of useless tools. Such condescension is in the direct line of scholarly elevation. A man grows in literary dignity with every conquest of that kind which he achieves over himself. It ought not to be suffered to put on the dignity of a self-conquest: it should be the intuition and the joy of a cultivated taste.

(4) An appreciation by the ministry of the dignity of popular success in preaching tends to elevate the intellectual culture of the people. The popular mind grows under any ministry which respects it. Mental strength grows under ministrations which are addressed to mental strength. Treated as if worthy of respect, the common people become the more worthy. Such preaching

always creates a wakeful, thinking commonalty. No matter how low it begins in the social scale, it always builds upward. Historians of the American Revolution express astonishment at the extent to which the most profound principles of government were familiar to the reasonings of the common people of New England at that period. Otis and Adams and Ames never could have argued as they did with a people who had not been trained by a ministry whose pulpit had laid out its strength on the people. They knew no "high" and "low" in the aims of their preaching. They acted on the principle of common sense, that, in building up any thing, the building process is as valuable at the bottom as at the top, and that the bottom may be the more vital to the stability of the structure. Thus acting, with no consciousness of literary theory, they hit upon one of the axioms of literary taste; that the most useful thing for its purpose is the best thing of its kind. Therefore their congregations were what they were, — the foundation and the pillars of a State.

Viewed thus in every light of which it is susceptible, the true ideal of a sermon is reflected back upon us as a production which is popular in the sense of being independent of class, and therefore as belonging to the first rank of literature. Let us admit this; let us model our preaching upon it. As builders of men, let us respect ourselves, and respect our work, in building low down, and in using the tools which our business requires. Let us count that as the most perfect literature, which is most perfectly adjusted to the most perfect ends by the most perfect uses of the materials and the arts of speech. Let us cultivate in this respect the literary taste of Christ. Can you conceive of him as laboring under the burden of literary enthusiasm to

improve and polish the Sermon on the Mount, or the Beatitudes, or the Lord's Prayer, by adapting them more tastefully to the upper classes of Judæa? Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

3d, A sermon is an oral address to the popular mind, *upon religious truth.* This is too obvious to need further remark than to observe two things. One is, that this quality distinguishes a sermon from secular lectures. Political, historical, scientific, literary discourses may be popularized in their materials and form, and may be orally delivered: the religious theme and discussion are necessary to constitute the sermon. The other is, that nothing is a sermon which is out of the range of the religious necessities of the people. Usefulness of discourse does not make preaching. Theodore Parker once discoursed, on a Sabbath morning, upon the "Prospects of the Democratic Party in America." It may have been a truthful and useful oration, but it was not a sermon. It was not religiously useful. No religious necessities of his audience called for its delivery.

4th, A sermon is an oral address to the popular mind, upon religious truth, *as contained in the Christian Scriptures.* Truth is contained in the Bible by expression and by implication. In either mode it has the biblical sanction. Inspiration recognizes sources of religious knowledge outside of itself. A sermon, therefore, may follow the line of biblical recognition, as well as that of the inspired record. A special significance appertains to this alliance of the sermon, in every form and theme of it, with the word of God. This will be evident from observing that natural theology is best adjusted to the uses of the pulpit when it breathes most heartily the biblical spirit. Only

when Christianized in spirit and in form does the religion of nature become on any large scale the power of God unto salvation. The most corrupt civilizations the world has ever seen have existed in the midst of its most impressive natural scenery. A temple of Venus, the scene of the most revolting orgies of Pagan *cultus*, stood in one of the most exquisite valleys of Southern Italy, where, if anywhere, one would suppose that nature would have led men to a spiritual worship. This is a symbol of the fate of natural theology everywhere, when it is left alone to contend with the depravity of the human heart. Be it ever so true or so pure, abrasion with depravity wears it dim, and wears it out, except when it is delivered in its biblical forms, and supported by its biblical auxiliaries. God in Christ, or no God at all, is the alternative suggested by the religious history of mankind.

The identity of a sermon with scriptural types of thought is emphasized, also, by the fact that preaching owes its existence to revealed religion. It is a remarkable fact that the religion of nature isolated from the Scriptures has never been preached on any large scale. Sporadic cases are of no account. Natural religion creates philosophers, and founds academies; it produces priests, and builds temples; it pictures and carves itself in symbols and ceremonies: but it has no churches, no pulpits, no preachers. Vinet says very truly, "There is no Mohammedan church, nor Brahmanical; and certainly there was no church in the religion of Homer." Natural religions all end where Christianity began. They create the temple, the symbol, the priest, the ritual, the choir, in a word, all the functions and the paraphernalia of the *cultus;* and there they stop. Beyond that, they have no growth, and no power

of conversion. Among the masses of mankind they do not arouse intelligent thinking enough to create the material on any broad scale for a preacher to work upon. They do not create the desire to be taught, reasoned with, persuaded, preached to, on religious themes. They do but imitate Christianity, when they employ preachers for their propagation. Gibbon speaks of the pulpit of the caliphs. Omar is represented as a preacher; but that conception of Mohammedan oratory was borrowed from the Christian vocabulary. The oral addresses of the caliphs were military harangues, nothing more. Alexander and Napoleon on the eve of battle were as truly preachers as Omar; and their aim of discourse was as really a religious aim as his. Only by a figure of speech, and a delusive one, can Mohammedan discourse be termed "preaching." Of all human systems of thought which have made nations in history, Mohammedanism contains the least material for preaching. It has no subjects for the pulpit. The system is fatalism pure and simple, the most brazen assault upon the common sense of mankind which stands recorded in history. It can not be consistently urged upon the convictions or the sensibilities of men by oratorical persuasion. The Mohammedan is not a proper subject of persuasion. He is not a reasoning being. Fate drives him in grooves. Hence the argument of Mohammedanism is the sword. Preaching, therefore, I repeat, is both theoretically and historically Christian. It owes its existence to the Christian Scriptures; and nothing but the spirit of biblical religion keeps it alive.

This view of the relation of the pulpit to the Bible is confirmed by the fact that retrograde tendencies of the Christian Church from its primeval purity are always tendencies to the disuse of preaching. A slid-

ing scale might be constructed, by which one might gauge the degree of corruption in the Church of the middle ages by the progressive decline of the pulpit. No matter whether the Church succumbed to Paganism or to philosophy, the result was the same: the pulpit succumbed proportionately. While the symbols of Christian worship multiplied in number, and increased in splendor, the symbol of Christian thinking and persuasion sunk into imbecility. When the Church lost its faith in the Bible as the only inspired source of knowledge, then sacerdotalism took the place of religious teaching, and the priesthood became too ignorant or too indolent, or both, to be preachers. Christianity became only a religion of the altar, a *cultus*, just as Paganism had been before it. There is no evidence from the history of Christianity, that worship, however spiritual and intelligent at the outset, can keep itself pure by the working of its own elements. The preservative from putrefaction, the disinfectant of moral disease, so far as human instrumentality is concerned, is the preaching element.

Reformatory struggles in the Church point to the same truth. They have always been aimed at two things which they have kept nearly abreast with each other One is the restoration of an uncorrupted and unfettered Bible; the other, the revival of the pulpit. The early Waldensian movement in Italy, that of Huss in Bohemia, that of Wickliffe in England, the Reformation of the sixteenth century, we have only to name these to recall the two great instrumentalities which they exalted, — a free Bible and a free pulpit. The conflict of the Puritans with Queen Elizabeth was waged chiefly around the same two *foci* of the religious thought of England, — the Bible in the homes, and a free pulpit

in the sanctuaries of the people. The Puritans contended for liberty to preach the word of God, and for multiplying the number of priests who could preach it. The papal party in the English Church decried both, and denied the necessity of either. The recovery of the biblical spirit to the piety of England was due to the Puritan prophecyings.

Does not history perpetually repeat itself, in this respect, in our own day? Revivals of religion go hand in hand with a deepened reverence for the Scriptures, and a multiplied use of the pulpit. A dying or a dead Church thrives, if at all, externally on its form of worship. Of evangelical denominations, those which exalt the pulpit above worship have the most vital sympathy with religious awakening among the people. The genius of revivals is germane to them. Those which exalt worship above preaching only tolerate such awakenings, as they feel the distant refluence of them from surrounding sects. In brief, the more exclusive the popular reverence is for the Bible as the only sacred book unrivaled by books of prayer, and catechisms, and confessions of faith, and the more intense the spirituality of the popular interpretation of the Bible unperverted by the love of forms, so much the more exalted is the respect of the people for the pulpit, and so much the more vital is preaching to their religious faith. Such is the law of religious life as evolved from the history of the Church. Account for it as we may, somehow the pulpit and the Bible go together. If the one sinks, it carries down the other: if the one drops out of the popular faith, the other dies. Neither is ever resuscitated alone. It is not, therefore, a narrow conception of a sermon, if we incorporate into its very definition the fact of its dependence on a revealed religion, and that, the religion of the Scriptures.

LECTURE II.

THE SERMON: ITS GENERIC IDEA.

5th. Continuing the discussion of the generic idea of a sermon, we notice a fifth thesis; namely, that a sermon is an oral address to the popular mind, upon religious truth as contained in the Scriptures, *and elaborately treated.* A sermon must be distinguished from certain forms of religious discourse, from which it does not differ except in point of elaboration. A religious exhortation, for instance, is not a sermon. A part of a sermon it may be; but hortation standing alone is not preaching. Informal remarks in a meeting for religious conference are not a sermon. Woven into a sermon they may be; but isolated they are not preaching. A sermon is a structure: it is something put together with care. It has unity, coherence, proportion, a beginning, a middle, and an end. As a literary production, it has a philosophical construction as truly as a tragedy or an epic poem.

How is this theory of the essential elaborateness of a sermon to be reconciled with the apparent power of spontaneous preaching? Dr. James Alexander repeats the experience of every pastor, when he expresses his surprise at the failure of his most costly efforts as compared with his extemporaneous effusions. How is this to be reconciled, can it indeed be reconciled, with the

theory here advanced of the necessary elaborateness of all pulpit discourse?

(1) I answer, by observing that the power of spontaneous preaching is often overrated. Often it is not true that such preaching has great relative power. We are all liable to a delusion in our judgment of this, and none more so than the preacher himself, who has every possible inducement, every temptation I may say, to see evidences which do not exist of effects from such preaching. Some subtle infirmities of human nature are gratified by the conviction that such preaching does accomplish the work of the pulpit. The temptation it presents is very insidious to dignify by the name of Christian simplicity that which is commonplace in thought, shallow in feeling, and ephemeral in effect. Let us, then, be honest with ourselves, and see this thing as it is. In the pulpit, as everywhere else, the presumption is always against the efficiency of any thing which costs the producer little. The facts of life confirm this presumption. Preaching, which is really the fruit of a mind at ease, does not end in powerful results. Profound impressions do not come from such sermons. Permanent impressions do not. Impressions formative of character do not. Impressions upon the strongest characters are from no such preaching. I speak now of the law of the pulpit respecting this thing, not of anomalous exceptions.

Much is often said and made of weeping in an audience. We overrate this. Tears are not evidence of the profoundest emotions. They are not more so in religion than in other things. They are sometimes nothing but a nervous luxury. They are not wholly beyond the stimulus of the will. A man weeps less easily as his sensibilities deepen with time, and his char

acter sloughs off self-delusions. Old age is very apt to be tearless. The dying almost never weep. In a public speaker tears are an infirmity to be got rid of, never a gift to be vain of. Audiences which are habitually moved to the weeping mood are not those in which the most healthful piety is forming under the ministrations of the pulpit. Their religious experience is in danger of settling into a routine of theatric sensibility. I once saw a German audience weeping under an exclamatory sermon such as would scarcely be tolerated in an American conference-meeting. The greater part of that audience, I was informed, were present at the theatre in the evening of the same day. It may be reasonably doubted whether such would have been the case, if the sermon had given them any thing to think of, instead of the luxury of a few tears.

The criticism of men of the world upon the habits of religious people is worth reading, if not heeding. A critic in the "Saturday Review" thus discourses: "The assumption that a ready command of lachrymal secretions is a sign of virtue is very common among a large class of people. . . . They find a sweet relish in comparing their own sensitiveness with the aridity of other folk. . . . This worship of demonstrative sensibility is one of the most silly and mischievous superstitions of modern times. . . . The fact is, that the sort of sensibility which is very close upon crying is in great degree constitutional. Some people are born with weaker nerves and softer susceptibilities than others, as some are born with red, and some with black hair. The fact has no moral significance either way. Hearts worn upon the sleeve are not the most delicate and sensitive." Such is the strong and rather stern good sense which the pulpit must encounter among

men of the world. It is not apt to be very tolerant of moist preachers and paralytic audiences.

(2) The genuine power of spontaneous preaching is very largely a reflection of the power of elaborate discourse. The first owes its existence to the second. You will not have been very long in the ministry when you will discover the worth of your own history in the pulpit. That which you say there you will find interpreted by that which you have said. That which you do will be received with the weight of that which you have done. That which you preach will go to the people with the momentum of that which you have been found to *be*. Your character will energize your words. This history of every preacher, and of his pulpit, is always to be taken into the account in judging of the efficiency of single sermons.

Apply this principle, for a moment, to the spontaneous sermon. The effect of such a sermon often indicates only that the preacher's present effort carries the weight of his history. One great sermon will overshadow and protect many small ones. Still more successfully will strong preaching as the rule bear up weak preaching as the exception. The truth is, that any great art, to be sustained in its weak points, must have its strong points. In all varieties of power there is a class of petty, one may almost say frivolous, instrumentalities which seem to have more power than they have, because of this secret suction of strength from richer resources. They can never be wisely depended on, to the neglect of those richer resources. They can not be even what they honestly are, without the cultivation of those resources. They are scintillations which can not have even their momentary glare, without the solid, massive, heated globes from which they emanate. As

there can not be a parody without a poem, so there can be no preaching impromptu without elaborate sermonizing to keep the pulpit alive, and to make preaching respectable enough to command a hearing for its inferior effusions.

(3) Another view of the subject of spontaneous preaching remains, which is the most vital of all. It is, that apparently spontaneous trains of thought are often the result of the most severe elaboration. Frequently that which seems to be preaching "offhand" is any thing but that. It is preceded by most laborious, and, as related to the subjects in hand, most masterly, mental processes. Years of culture are behind it. It is the ripened fruit of thoughts which struggled into the mind's life years before, and which have been mellowing there ever since.

Two classes of these ripened materials are observable in sermons of the kind now in question. One is that of strong thought, which has lost its appearance of elaboration through the long familiarity of the preacher's mind with it. He has revolved it, and dissected it, and pursued it into lateral relations, and experimented with the uses of it, till he knows it all around and all through. The choice aspects of it he recalls on the instant. The lights and shadows of it are all pictured in his mind's eye. Fragments and connections of it which are useless for popular impression he knows, and therefore he knows when to let them alone. His perception of it now has the quickness of intuition; but was it intuition at the first? His use of it now has the spontaneity of genius; but was it genius originally? His preaching of it now has the facility of nature. There seems to be no science, no art, no study, no toil, about it. The truth seems just to flow to him and

through him by natural inspiration. Verily he has "opened his mouth and taught them, saying." But was he always inspired thus? Not at all. He has reached his present mental possession of that truth by some of the most elaborate mental processes of his life; but the elaboration is out of sight, perhaps forgotten by the preacher himself. The delving and the boring and the blasting are finished; and now the fountain gushes out, the freest and easiest and freshest thing in nature, just because the vein has been struck. It is only a play upon words to exalt such preaching as opposed to or different from elaborated sermons.

But often there is another element in such preaching, more valuable than any intellectual fruitage, yet indicative of elaboration of the severest and profoundest quality. It is that of thought which has grown rich in the mind of the preacher through his own long experience of it in his own character. No other elements of truth are so thoroughly at a man's command as elements like these. If he is a true man, he is living them every hour. The preaching of such truths is the nearest approach one can make to the discourses of Christ. No wonder that it is has power. But is there no elaboration lying back of such power? The most intense and the most intricate elaboration of truth is involved in those mental processes by which character is formed and consolidated. As no other product of thought equals character, so no other discipline is so severe or so complicated, so ingenious or so artful, as the hidden discipline by which character matures. No matter whether the preacher has derived his experience of the truth from the stimulus of books or not, the essential point is that his mind has gone through the process of revolutionary struggle in coming to its present com-

mand of the truth he preaches. He is but a half-formed man, if he has not discovered this, and if he therefore decries elaborate sermons as something unlike his own. If his is not elaborate preaching, there is no such preaching.

You can all easily test the truth of the views here advanced, by your own experience, real or probable. Suppose that you were driven in an emergency to preach without present preparation. You are on a journey. On the Sabbath morning you are placed in circumstances in which you must preach, or be cowardly, through fear for your reputation. You have no written sermon which is accessible: you must preach extemporaneously. You have only the time in which the devotional services are in progress to cast your thoughts into order, and choose a text. What sort of a text will you certainly choose in such an exigency? what kind of subject? what train of thought? Will they be text, theme, thoughts, wholly novel to you, unexplored, untried, undigested? or will they be materials which are familiar to you? Most surely, if you are a man of sense, they will be the latter. You will instinctively select a channel in which your mind has been used to flowing, and in which, therefore, it flows easily and naturally. You will, in other words, choose a theme on which your mind has a history, an experience either of intellect or of heart, or of both; and that history, if it is worth any thing to anybody, has cost you something. You have toiled for it; you have struggled for it; you have given time to it; you have suffered mental failures about it: in short, you have elaborated it. When, therefore, at the close of the service, you see evidence that good has been done by your preaching, perhaps a soul awakened or converted, de

not set it down to the credit of simple preaching as opposed to intellectual preaching. Do not be beguiled into a lazy ministry. Rest assured that such preaching is truly useful just in proportion to its cost in previous labor. Up to the extreme border of your own hard-bought experience, you can preach thus with power. beyond that border, such preaching is the weakest of all possible dilutions. When it ceases to be an experience, and becomes an imitation, it wins no hearts, because it commands no respect. The pulpit which then depends upon it for results dies out, and no man mourns. For the reasons thus given, we insert into the very definition of a sermon, as belonging to the generic idea of the thing, that it must be a structure, and therefore the fruit of elaboration.

6th, A sermon is an oral address to the popular mind, upon religious truth contained in the Scriptures, and elaborately treated *with a view to persuasion.* This assigns the sermon to the loftiest form of rhetorical discourse. It distinguishes preaching, also, from two species of composition from which it is not otherwise entirely distinct.

(1) One of these is poetry. Poetry and preaching may have numerous resemblances. Both may be orally delivered. Homer chanted the Iliad. The poetic drama is constructed primarily with reference to oral utterance. Both may be addressed to the popular mind. The ballads of all literatures are thus addressed. Italian improvisators address their poetic effusions to the populace. Both may be upon religious themes, upon biblical themes, upon themes elaborately treated. For all these qualities, Milton hoped for the "Paradise Lost" an undying fame. Madame de Staël, in "Corinne," represents some of the ephemeral productions of the im-

provisators as finished specimens of literature. A poem, then, may possess every feature which has been remarked as essential to homiletic discourse, except one. Poetry and preaching differ in the conscious aim of the speaker. All forms of poetry differ from all forms of oratory in the fact that a preacher always consciously aims at the persuasion of the hearer, while a poet never does so. The essential idea of poetry is a vexed theme of literary criticism. After all that has been said and written upon it, I find the essential idea of poetry in the spontaneity of its utterance of truth in rhythmic forms. Popular criticism very nearly hits this principle, when it speaks of poetical productions as poetical effusions. Poetry floats in an element of emotion. It flows unbidden: it comes into life in speech because it must come. Being the expression of a soul so full of its thought that it utters the thought for its own sake, poetry represents no consciousness of design to move the will of reader or hearer. Hence in the ancient criticism the poet was the creator: he wrought only for self-expression. Something of the unconsciousness of inspired seers clings to all the ideas which the ancient critics had of the genius of poetry.

To this view it may be plausibly objected, "What of certain popular ballads which have moved masses of men to a purpose? What of revolutionary ballads like the Marseillaise Hymn? What of certain battle-songs like that of Gustavus Adolphus?" These have so thrilled and moved to action armies and nations, that they rank among the most persuasive powers in literature: is there, then, no persuasive aim in their construction? I answer, none, so far as the consciousness of the poet is concerned in the act of composing. The recorded experience of poets confirms this theory. Such

productions never come into life by conscious design: they always burst upon the world as a surprise, — as much a surprise to their authors as to any one else. No man ever creates such a hymn who sets about it with conscious aim. This theory is confirmed by the history of the best specimens of religious hymnology. The choicest hymns of all languages, which have lifted the Christian Church to heaven in the service of song, have not been created with any such conscious design. Their moving of the world was in the divine purpose, not in the human purpose, of their construction. They all breathe an atmosphere of solitude. Intense individualism in communion with God characterizes them. "*My* faith looks up to *Thee*" is the keynote of their production. Listening and sympathizing and participating and obedient audiences are as much out of mind as out of sight, when such immortal hymns come to their birth. Only the Spirit of God then moves upon the face of the waters.

On the other hand, the least impressive fragments of all our hymnological literature are the expostulatory and comminatory hymns. They are not poetry: they are only preaching in meter. A perfect taste rejects them. In the nature of things, an exhortation to repentance is not meant to be sung. A multitude of our religious melodies, popular in revivals of religion, come under this condemnation. A perfected spiritual taste, and a perfected æsthetic taste as well, eschew them. The time is coming when our hymn-books for use in the public service of song will be expurgated of every thing which is not a spontaneous outflow of some form of communion with God. A hymn-book limited to the loftiest songs of worship would be as perfect in poetic quality as in spiritual experience. In both

respects it would be a reproduction of the Psalms of the Old Testament, in which but one solitary instance occurs of expostulatory threatening. Since these pages were written, I have been confirmed in the views they advance of the nature of true poetry by discovering an expression by Goethe on the same subject. He says, "Poetry is the spontaneous effluence of a soul absorbed in its own inspirations."

What, now, is the distinctive feature of oratory as compared with poetry? It is the ascendency over every thing else of that which does not exist at all in poetry; namely, the conscious aim at persuasion. In poetry, the audience is nothing: in oratory, the audience is every thing. In poetry, therefore, persuasion finds no place: in oratory, it commands every place. Preaching, therefore, excludes every thing which is not either persuasion, or a tributary to persuasion. In the consciousness of the preacher in the act of preaching, and in the consciousness of the hearer in the act of listening, this aim at persuasion is everywhere and always felt. Nothing is preaching of which this is not true: nothing is eloquence of which this is not true. Eloquence is always an aim at a mark, never a solitary self-expression. As Daniel Webster defined it, it is "always a progress on, right on, to an object." That object in the end is always the same, — persuasion. In true preaching therefore, argument is never used for the sake of the argument; illustration, never for the sake of the illustration; ornament, never for the sake of the ornament. These are always means to an end, and the end is persuasion. The more elaborate they are, if true to their purpose, the more faithfully tributary they are to the one end, and the more powerful is the impetus they give to the movement of discourse towards that end.

The broader the sweep of the circle, the more irresistible is the momentum of the descent, and the more concentrated the unity of the blow struck.

(2) The second of the two species of composition from which the present thesis distinguishes preaching is that species of prose composition in which the only object is either intellectual or emotive. Some compositions there are which combine every requisite of a sermon except this, of aim at the will of a hearer. Some discourses in the pulpit are purely instructive in their aims: knowledge is communicated for the sake of the knowledge, and nothing more. Others are purely imaginative: feeling is wrought upon by imaginative art, for the luxury of the feeling, and nothing more. The question arises, then, Are these productions sermons? The answer, strictly speaking, must be in the negative. The immediate object of a sermon may be instruction, or the excitement of emotion, or both; but the ultimate object is neither. True eloquence, and therefore true preaching, always foreshadow the persuasion of the hearer as their final aim. They may not disclose the thing to which he is to be persuaded; but they must disclose the fact of something to which he is to be persuaded. In a series of sermons, for instance, the applicatory persuasion may lie at the end of the series; but its beginning and middle will breathe the spirit of the coming persuasive process. That is living in the consciousness of the preacher, and the whole line of the discussion will vibrate with it. The discussion exists for it and for nothing else.

Herein lies the vital distinction between the pulpit and the stage. Theatric discourse, in its purest and most lofty purpose, stops short of the persuading of a hearer. It may amuse, it may instruct, it may rouse

emotion, it may play indefinitely back and forth between intellect and sensibility; but it does not persuade. It is busy with the intellectual faculties, it plays with the sensibilities; it riots among the passions; but there it ends. It does not move upon the will as the grand point to be carried by dramatic appeal. Just here the pulpit and stage are at antipodes to each other. On the stage, the will of the hearer is nothing; the intellect and sensibilities every thing. In the pulpit, the will is every thing; the intellect and sensibilities nothing but tributaries.

Yet this distinction condemns certain varieties of discourse which are often heard in pulpits. Some discourses are essentially theatric in their aim. They instruct, and that only; they sport with the imagination, and that only; they play with the feelings, and that only. Specially in certain forms of argumentative discourse is the theatric quality obvious. It marks the chief distinction between two classes of argumentative preachers. One preacher discourses as if he felt, and he makes his audience feel, that his argument is the all in all. He argues for the sake of the intellectual treat; he communicates the knowledge for the sake of the knowledge; he tasks the intellect for the sake of the strain; and that is the whole of it. The being of God, and the necessity of an Atonement, he proves as Agassiz would have lectured on an Amazonian fish or the glacial theory. Another preacher will appear to feel, and will make his audience feel, that his argument is a preliminary; his use of the intellect is an instrument; the whole argumentative process is a means to an end; and the whole discourse is alive and tremulous with the consciousness of that end. He proves an Atonement as he would build a raft, or man a life-boat, for drowning

men. This eager on-looking to the end in all the intellectual processes of the pulpit is to preaching what the circulation of the blood is to the vital powers of the body. If it languishes, life languishes: when it ceases, life goes out. Therefore the persuasive aim enters into the very definition of a sermon.

LECTURE III.

THE SERMON: CLASSIFICATION, ANALYSIS.

II. THE generic idea of a sermon, then, is that of an oral address to the popular mind, on religious truth contained in the Scriptures, and elaborately treated with a view to persuasion. Proceeding with this generic idea of preaching, we are prepared to consider sermons more specifically as subject to certain varieties of classification.

1st, Homiletic classification is founded, either in practice or in theory, upon seven different principles. They are the following.

(1) One is the mode of delivery. On this principle, we recognize, in practice, sermons as delivered from manuscript, from memory, and extemporaneously. This, obviously, is not a rhetorical classification. The same principles of rhetoric apply to an extemporaneous as to a written discourse, if both are orally delivered. Relatively this is not an important classification. No vital principles of discourse are concerned with it: still, in practice, it is a convenient classification.

(2) A second classification is founded upon the occasions on which sermons are delivered. This, again, is a superficial arrangement of discourses: relatively it is unimportant; strictly it is not rhetorical. Still it is often a practical convenience to classify by occasion.

We therefore speak of "ordinary" and "occasional" sermons; and occasional sermons we subdivide indefinitely.

(3) A third classification is founded upon the subjects of sermons. Schott classifies sermons mainly by subject. He terms them "doctrinal," "practical," "historical," and "philosophical." But the distinction between "doctrinal" and "practical," as applied to sermons, is mischievous. Schott is apparently sensible of this; and he therefore tones down the distinction by terming the one class "doctrino-practical," and the other class "practico-doctrinal." This is keen analysis, and very necessary in practice, if the primary distinction is retained. It hints at the relative proportion of doctrinal discussion to practical application in the two classes of sermons.

Again: classification by subject is not a rhetorical method. As a rhetorical structure, a sermon is independent of subject; that is, its rhetorical peculiarities do not depend on its subject. Still it must be conceded that classification by subject is a practical convenience. Preachers do and will arrange subjects, rather than discourses. This may often take the place of more philosophical arrangements. It is impossible to reduce to a brief series all the themes of sermons; but, on this principle of division, the most important classes consist of sermons upon doctrines, upon duties, upon persons, upon events, and upon institutions.

(4) A fourth classification is founded upon the character of the audience addressed. This is not rhetorically significant of the differences of sermons. What matters it to the essential structure of a discourse, whether it be an argument addressed to learned hearers, or an argument addressed to the illiterate? An

argument is an argument; and this fact is the thing which determines its rhetorical character. Still the distribution of sermons by reference to the audience addressed is a practical convenience. Pastors often designate their discourses, and arrange the proportions of their preaching, by the questions: "Is this a sermon to Christians? to the unconverted? to parents? to children? to young men? to the aged? to the afflicted? to merchants? to clergymen? to Sabbath schools?" and so on indefinitely. Valueless as this method is for the purposes of rhetorical science, it has a large place in the habits of pastors.

(5) A fifth classification suggested by Dr. Campbell is founded upon the different faculties of mind to which sermons are supposed to be addressed. Dr. Campbell thus distributes the discourses of the pulpit into those addressed to the understanding, those addressed to the imagination, those addressed to the passions, and those addressed to the will. The ingenuity of this arrangement is unique. It would appear to be a neat, complete, philosophical distribution of all possible discourses. Yet it is remarkable for its unpractical character. We may safely believe that no man ever used it in adjusting the proportions of his preaching. Neither is there any rhetorical principle in this method of classification. Rhetoric does not go out of the discourse itself to find the principle by which to classify it. It analyzes the thing heard, not the hearer, to discover what that thing is.

(6) A certain anomalous classification, which is a peculiarity of homiletics, is founded on the use made of the texts of sermons. I term it an anomaly because general rhetoric does not recognize it. Oral discourse as such need not have a text. Outside of the pulpit

it commonly has none. Yet in the pulpit the text is a necessity, and the classification of sermons upon the use made of the text is convenient and of great value. Though an anomaly in rhetoric, we may accept it as homiletic. The anomaly grows out of the necessities of the pulpit. On this principle, sermons may be arranged in four classes, — the topical, the textual, the expository, and the inferential. The topical sermon is one in which a subject is deduced from the text, but discussed independently of the text. The textual sermon is one in which the text is the theme, and the parts of the text are the divisions of the discourse, and are used as a line of suggestion. An expository sermon is one in which the text is the theme, and the discussion is an explanation of the text. The inferential sermon is one in which the text is the theme, and the discussion is a series of inferences directly from the text: the text is the premise, a series of inferences is the conclusion.

As these distinctions are of great practical value in the labors of the pulpit, let me illustrate these four classes of sermons by examples in which the same text shall be employed in the four methods here indicated. The text is Phil. ii. 12, 13. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." From this text we may deduce the subject of the "Sovereignty of God in the Work of Salvation," or the subject of the "Activity of Man in Regeneration," or the "Duty of Earnestness in seeking Salvation." Either of these themes might then be discussed independently of any further use of the text, and we should thus have a *topical* sermon.

But we might make the text itself the theme of dis-

course, and might follow its line of thought by remarking: 1. The duty enjoined in the text, "Work out salvation;" 2. The individual responsibility for the soul's salvation implied in the text, "Work out your own salvation;" 3. The spirit with which salvation should be sought, "With fear and trembling;" 4. The dependence of effort to be saved upon the power of God, "It is God which worketh in you;" 5. Dependence upon God for salvation is the great encouragement to effort for salvation, "Work, *for* it is God which worketh in you." This train of thought developed would constitute a *textual* sermon.

Yet again we might make the text the theme, and let the sermon consist of an explanation of the text, by inquiring: 1. In what sense is a sinner commanded to achieve his own salvation? 2. What is the spirit of fear and trembling in the work of salvation? 3. In what sense does the text affirm God to be the author of salvation? 4. What connection does the text affirm between the earnestness of the sinner and the agency of God? An answer to these inquiries, devoted to the language of the text, and designed to evolve the force of the text, would constitute an *expository* sermon.

Once more: we might consider the text as the theme, and assume, that, as a well-known passage, it does not need much explanation. Explain it briefly, if you please, give in a paraphrase the result without the process of exposition, and then let the body of the sermon consist of a series of inferences drawn directly from the text. 1. That salvation is a pressing necessity to every man. 2. That every man is responsible for his own salvation. 3. That every man who is saved does in fact achieve his own salvation. 4. That dependence upon God is a help, not a hindrance, to salvation.

5. The guilt of trifling with religious convictions. 6. The unreasonableness of waiting in impenitence for the interposition of God. 7. The uselessness of lukewarm exertions to secure salvation. 8. The certainty that every man who is in earnest to be saved will be saved. This line of thought developed would be an *inferential* sermon. Its characteristic feature is neither topical, nor textual, nor expository discussion, but independent yet direct inference from the text.

(7) A seventh method of classifying sermons remains to be considered. It is a classification founded on the mode of treating the subject of discourse. This method is preferable to all others for several reasons. In the first place, it is a strictly rhetorical classification. It does not go outside of the discourse itself to find the character of the discourse. What is it that chiefly distinguishes one sermon from another? Not the subject, not the occasion, not the audience, not the method of delivery, not the faculty of mind addressed, not the use made of the text: it is the method of discussion. By this we must necessarily characterize any discourse as a rhetorical structure. Moreover, this is a practically convenient classification. The practical as well as the theoretic differences of sermons arise chiefly out of diversity of method in the treatment of subjects. Nothing else creates so wide a difference, or so many varieties. Again: this is a comprehensive classification: it covers all varieties of sermons. No variety exists in the usage of the pulpit, none is conceivable in homiletic theory, which it does not reach. Furthermore, it is no peculiarity of homiletics: it covers all varieties of oral address. The principle threads every thing known as public discourse, and does it naturally, without forced connections. Ask, respecting any kind of public speech,

what is its method of discussion, and you classify it instantly as a rhetorical structure, upon a principle which combines philosophical accuracy and practical convenience with comprehensiveness of application. Upon this principle of division, sermons may be arranged in four classes, — the explanatory, the illustrative, the argumentative, the persuasive.

Explanatory sermons, as the name indicates, include all sermons the chief object of which is explanation. It may be an explanation of a text; then the discourse is technically an expository sermon. It may be an explanation of a doctrine; then it is one kind of doctrinal sermon. It may be an explanation of a duty; then it is one kind of ethical sermon. It may be an explanation of a ceremony; then it is one kind of sermon on a positive institution. The rhetorical feature which characterizes all these discourses is the same, — the process of explaining what the thing is.

Illustrative sermons, as the name betokens, comprise all sermons the chief object of which is to intensify the vividness of truth; not to originate the knowledge of truth, but to realize conceptions of it already known; not to explain truth, though often it is an incident of illustrative discourse that it does explain; not to prove truth, though often it is an incident of illustration that it does prove. The prime object is to impart glow to truth, to make men feel the reality of what they know It is literally to *illustrate*, to make truth lustrous, and therefore impressive. This class of sermons includes, you will perceive, descriptive discourses, sermons imaginative of biblical scenes, historical and biographical sermons, also a large class of discourses upon acknowledged doctrines, duties, virtues, the force of which lies dormant in the popular faith. The range and signifi-

ance of such preaching in nominally Christian lands are obvious at a glance. Not explanation, not logic, not hortation, but pictorial imagination holds the place of pre-eminence in such preaching among the conditions of ministerial success.

Argumentative sermons, as the title signifies, embrace all sermons the chief object of which is proof. They are aimed primarily at the intellect of the hearer. They propose either to create conviction where none exists, or to change conviction where the false exists. The prime element in such a discourse is logic pure and simple. The syllogism is the framework: belief is the result aimed at. This class comprises, therefore, a large proportion of so-called doctrinal sermons, also many ethical sermons.

Persuasive sermons have an infelicity in their title. It has been affirmed that all preaching has persuasion for its ultimate object, even that nothing is a sermon which is not aimed at persuasion. It is a misfortune to restrict the term "persuasive" to any one class of discourses; but no other one word designates the thing by which a certain class of sermons are distinguished. It includes all those sermons the *immediate* object of which is persuasion. The key-note of the persuasive sermon, technically so called, is urgency to present action.

2d, Before leaving this topic of the classification of sermons, several *memoranda* deserve mention.

(1) The classification here commended does not limit discourse to any one rhetorical method. The preponderance of one method, not the exclusion of others, gives character to every class. We pronounce a sermon explanatory, if explanation leads the discussion. Illustration, argument, hortation may all exist in it, but

only as subordinates. So each element, in its turn, may lead the discussion; and the sermon is classed accordingly. A classification which should leave no room for this intermingling of rhetorical elements would be practically useless. Practice would leap over it. In all good preaching the standard elements of composition are constantly interchanged, but always with subordination of the majority to one. Rhetoric and practice in this respect exactly tally. Use and beauty require the same thing.

(2) The four elements of discourse recognized in this classification cover every variety of oratorical composition. Explanation, illustration, argument, persuasion are all that exist of rhetorical material and method with which to deal. One or more of these four things must be done in all good discourse; and in such discourse nothing else can be done. When you have exhausted these four elements of speech, you have exhausted all the resources of speech. This classification, therefore, includes all the variety of which rational discourse is susceptible.

(3) The proper classification of sermons is fundamental to the subject of unity of discourse. A sermon can not be pointed in its aim, if it has no oneness of rhetorical character by which to classify it. The same qualities which adjust it to its class give it unity as an individual. If you have a clear idea of the kind of discourse which you purpose to frame, that localizes your sermon where it belongs, and at the same time goes far to unify it as a rhetorical structure. Oneness of impression results from the same process by which you gain oneness of construction.

(4) The proper classification of sermons is equally fundamental to the subject of proportion in preaching

In a ministry of ten years, the proportions of preaching depend more on the adjustment of the four grand methods of rhetorical discussion than on all things else combined. No variety of subject, of text, of occasion, of audience, will save you from monotony, if you always do one and the same thing with subject, text, occasion, and audience. Always explain, or always prove, or always paint, or always exhort, and versatility of impression is impossible, though you range the universe for themes. Construct your sermons for ten years so that you have symmetrical proportions of argumentative, of illustrative, of explanatory, and of persuasive materials, and you have symmetry of impression, without the possibility of monotony or of distortion. Be the impression strong or weak, it will be rounded. It will leave no blanks and no excrescences.

III. We have thus far considered the sermon in its generic idea and in its fundamental varieties. We have now to consider the analysis of a sermon. What are its constituent parts?

(1) In reply, let it be observed, that by the parts of a discourse are not meant portions necessarily visible as such to the eye in the manuscript. They are not apartments in the area of a sermon. Some of them are visibly distinct in the writing, and audibly distinct in the delivery, but not all of them.

(2) By the constituent parts of a sermon are not meant parts all of which are essential in every discourse. Nearly all of them are so, but exceptions exist.

(3) By the constituent parts of a sermon are meant those features of discourse, which, in the process of its construction, must engage the attention of the preacher. If sometimes one or more of the parts of a discourse

are unnecessary, still a preacher must consider them, that he may decide intelligently that they are unnecessary. Is an introduction superfluous in a given sermon? Perhaps so. But the preacher must consider whether or not it be so.

(4) Philosophically regarded, the number of the parts of a discourse depends on the limitation of terms. This accounts for the diversity in the analyses of discourse adopted by the ancient rhetoricians. Thus Aristotle reckons four parts only, the introduction, the proposition, the proof, the conclusion. Of these, he affirms that only the proposition and proof are essential to the rhetorical completeness of a discourse. Quintilian enumerates five parts, the introduction, the narration, the proof, the refutation, the conclusion. Yet there is no material distinction between Aristotle's proposition, and Quintilian's narration; between Aristotle's proof, and Quintilian's proof and refutation. The narration in Quintilian's analysis referred specially to forensic address: it was a lawyer's statement of his case. This corresponds to what Aristotle meant by the proposition. Proof and refutation also are parts of one process, which Aristotle, with a sharper analytic eye than Quintilian, discerns as such, and calls by one name. Does Aristotle, then, fail to recognize the introduction, when he pronounces it non-essential to the completeness of a rhetorical structure? Not at all. In a proposition he would in that case include all that is requisite to a skillful enunciation of the subject. The proposition thus extended would commonly comprise an introduction.

(5) It follows, then, that the question whether we shall adopt a condensed or an extended analysis of a sermon is chiefly one of convenience in criticism. For

purely scientific theory, the more condensed analysis is the more finished; but, for convenience in practical criticism, the more extended subdivision is the superior. I prefer, therefore, to enumerate the parts of a sermon as follows: namely, the text, the explanation, the introduction, the proposition, the division, the development, and the conclusion. Is the text a necessary part of a sermon? Yes, or no; on the same principle on which Aristotle in one view admitted, and in another rejected, the introduction. Doubtless a complete rhetorical structure on a scriptural theme may be formed without a text. The text may also be theoretically regarded as an incident to the proposition, and involved in the process of announcing a subject. But in practice preachers have a text: it is in practice commonly distinct from the proposition. Important homiletic questions concern it as a text, and a text only: therefore it is convenient to treat it thus in homiletic theory.

IV. We recognize, then, seven principal parts of a discourse for the pulpit, under the titles above named. It will be the object of the subsequent lectures to consider them in their order. Before doing so, however, I wish to forewarn you of several things which may otherwise occasion you some disappointment as we proceed.

Let me ask you to observe, first, the necessity of minute criticism in our discussion of these parts of a sermon. Many things must receive attention which may appear to you trivial. Relatively to some other things, they are trivial, considered singly; but in the aggregate they are not so. Preachers err egregiously who trust to the excellences of discourse to weigh down minute defects. Multitudes of clergymen suffer under a contracted usefulness, because their sterling virtues

are blocked by numberless little impediments which reduplicate the amount of friction. A commanding genius is required to force the way to results through deficiencies in themselves so small that genius despises them. But that which a genius can do successfully, I can not; probably you can not. Chrysostom, the golden-mouthed, may be useful in spite of violations of taste which would bury in oblivion a pastor of wooden speech. Besides, it is the inferior genius which contemns inferior excellences. The very first order of mind does no such thing. Michael Angelo did not think it beneath him to execute one of the consummate marvels of his genius in the carving of a peach-stone. So the most exalted style of manhood in the ministry will count no excellence too minute to subserve the objects of the pulpit. Some of the processes of preaching are of such a character, that no genius can force them. They must be performed warily, gently, scrupulously. They are like the movements of a watch: only a few grains of sand are needed to clog them; and the more perfect the movement, the more easy its arrest.

A second preliminary suggestion is that of the necessity of profuse illustration in the discussion of the parts of a sermon. Mr. Dickens says that criticism in literature of any kind "is not worth a farthing without innumerable examples." This is doubly apt in application to homiletic criticism. The mere statement and eulogy of principles, however minute, form the most useless kind of discourse on such topics as must come before us. By far the most difficult part of the process needed is the discovery or the invention of pertinent illustrations.

A third suggestion, preliminary to the work before us, is that a defect in preaching often needs to be made

ludicrous to excite our repugnance to it effectually. A curious phenomenon in literary history is this, that the pulpit has tolerated faults which literary taste endures nowhere else. The seriousness of the work of the pulpit seems to have acted as a shield to deformities which good taste feels to be intolerable elsewhere. There is no remedy for this shelter of the pulpit from robust criticism, except that preachers should therefore be more severe in their criticism of themselves. No other fault is so hurtful as one which is sanctified by its surroundings. Honest good sense may see it, but can not get at it through fear of irreverence. We must subject ourselves to healtful criticism in such a case. If we can fix in mind a vivacious caricature of such faults, put them into the dress of a clown, we do ourselves a good service. Blessed be the man who invented caricature! We are compelled to practice this adroitness on our own minds to spur them up to an instinctive repulsion of a fault which we shall tolerate otherwise on the plea that we have a pious object. Set that down as the plea of mental indolence: it is nothing else. The proper antidote to it is ridicule.

The fourth preliminary remark is that in these lectures many things must be observed the necessity of which you will outgrow. Homiletic discipline is sometimes undervalued heedlessly as a preacher advances in his profession, because he finds, that, in some respects, he leaves the need of it behind him. His own good sense teaches him some of its lessons so thoroughly, that he begins to doubt whether the time ever was when he did not know them by heart. But homiletic discipline does its work for a man, if it expedites his experience. A young man receives a great boon in any thing which economizes expenditure of his early manhood. Homi-

letic lectures, therefore, should in my view be aimed at the early years of practice in the pulpit. Their immediate object is to teach a man how to begin his work. They are valuable just in proportion to their power to diminish the inevitable waste of early effort to its minimum. That a young preacher quickly outgrows them is the best evidence that they have been effective. That discipline in every thing which we outgrow the need of is the discipline to which we are the most deeply indebted. Literature contains no other one thing to which we owe so much as to the Roman alphabet.

These remarks suggest a fifth preliminary: it is that homiletic instruction can never make a preacher. Unreasonable expectations often defeat the very object of homiletic discipline. Men often come to it, not as to discipline, but as to a process of accumulation. They expect to be put in possession of a new power of speech. They expect homiletics to give them pulpit eloquence, as history gives them the opinions of the past, and dogmatic theology those of the present. This is absurd. Preaching is a business. Every business must be learned in the main by the doing of it. The theory can give you principles to start with, can forewarn of perils, can set up defenses, can disclose existing faults in culture, can reveal abnormal tendencies of mind, and disproportion of mental character, can do all that theory does for a man in any thing which is a practical business. In brief, it can make the business practicable; but it can never create the doing of it. A man must work the theory into his own culture, so that he shall execute it unconsciously. This he can do only by his own experience of the theory in his own practice till it becomes a second

nature. This is the work of time. We learn how to live by living: so we learn how to preach by preaching. Yet law, principle, theory have as valuable a use in the one case as in the other. Vinet says that the "homiletics of the study should leave room for that of the temple and the parish." Not so: the homiletics of the study *is* that of the temple and the parish. So far as it becomes a part of the preacher himself, he will be constantly emitting it from his own culture in expedients of usefulness which will be the legitimate fruits of it, but which will seem to him to be the spontaneous production of the hour

LECTURE IV.

THE TEXT: HISTORY, USES.

THE first thing which attracts the attention of a critic of pulpit discourse is the custom of founding it upon selections of inspired words. It will aid us in obtaining the true theory of the text as a part of pulpit discourse, to consider, in the first place: —

I. Some notices of the history of the custom of employing texts. The sources of information on this topic are not fertile. Objections to the custom are almost wholly of modern origin. At least, if objections existed in the early Church, they have not lived in historic records of opinion.

1st, We may observe, first, the Jewish origin of the custom. It had its birth, unquestionably in the old Jewish reverence for the letter of the word of God. What, then, was the position of the text in the Jewish idea of a religious discourse? In the earliest Jewish worship the text was the chief part of the discourse. Being originally a direct communication from God, it absorbed all the interest of a hearer in itself. When first revealed, it must have stood alone, without enlargement, without comment. The very words of God, and no other, were the first sermon. Large portions of the Scriptures of those times were chosen as the themes of meditation in the temple. Preaching, other than the

reading of the law and the prophets, can scarcely be said to have existed. The nearest approximation to it was simply the interpretation of the passage which had previously been read. In the Jewish idea, the inspired text is the sermon; comment upon it, an appendage More than this prevailed subsequently in the later worship of the synagogue. Our Saviour and some of the Apostles made the reading of the law in the synagogue an occasion of extended exposition and hortation. Their doing so excited no surprise among the Jews, it being already an established usage among them. Still, the central idea of preaching was exposition. The inspired text was the center of interest.

2d, Observe, secondly, the transfer of the custom of employing texts, from Jewish to Christian usage. Apostolic usage was not uniform. The Apostles often preached without texts. An evident reason for this is found, as in the case of our Lord himself, in the fact that they were themselves inspired teachers. But we find no trace of preaching without a text among the immediate successors of the Apostles. The instant that inspiration ceased, the Jewish reverence for the inspired records was revived, and the only model of preaching known for some centuries was the homily; that is, as we should call it, a practical exposition, or, as the Scotch clergy would term it, an expository lecture. Sometimes several homilies were preached on one occasion, each occupying from six to twelve minutes. The etymology of the word "text" suggests very nearly the ancient idea of its relation to the homily: it was *textus* (woven in), the warp and woof of the whole production.

3d, Observe, thirdly, the Romish corruption of the custom of employing texts. In this period of the his-

tory of the custom several things are noticeable. The allegorical principles of interpretation applied to the Scriptures by Origen and others after him destroyed the legitimate force of the custom. It destroyed logical connection between text and homily. A text which is torn from its connections in inspired usage, or to which an imaginary sense is given, is no text. This was largely true of the use of texts in the time of Augustine. It was the taste of the age to make a text mean any thing that was convenient, or fancifully attractive, or more especially any thing that should seem to support the dominant philosophy of the times. The Protestant pulpit owes nearly all the puerility, and the unscholarly license which it tolerates in the interpretation and uses of texts, to that period in which grammatico-historical exegesis was abandoned, and the mystical interpretation took its place.

Moreover, the unsettling of the inspired canon at that time corrupted the sources of texts. The consequence was that sermons were often preached upon passages from apocryphal sources. The reverence for philosophy also weakened the clerical reverence for texts of the Scriptures. In many instances it was deemed a matter of indifference whether texts were chosen from inspired sources or not. Melanchthon says that they were sometimes taken from the ethics of Aristotle. This was perfectly natural. A forced interpretation of inspired language brings it into conflict with the common sense of men. In such a conflict, no language can hold its place in the reverence of the human mind. When it had become the usage of the pulpit to employ a biblical text as no other language would be seriously employed by a sane mind, it was an improvement to turn from St. Paul to Aristotle, whose language had not

yet undergone distortion. As a consequence of the corruption of texts, some of the Fathers preached without a text. This, too, was a natural result. Here and there a vigorous thinker would revolt from the puerility of the schoolmen, and throw off all trammels upon free discourse. Some of the sermons of Chrysostom were preached without a text. Augustine preached over four hundred sermons without texts.

During this period the topical sermon came into existence. For the first twelve centuries of the Christian era, the restriction of the text to an isolated verse, or fragment of a verse, of the Bible was unknown. The topical sermon, therefore, was an innovation. Originally the Christian sermon was an exposition, and only that. In England it was called, for some centuries, "postillating." The only kind of preaching which varied from it was that of preaching without a text, and which was called "declaring;" that is, the preacher "declared" his subject and discussion without explaining any text.

The assertion that the use of texts met with no important dissent is not true of such a use of the text as the topical sermon creates. The restriction of the text to a verse, or a fragment of a verse, which is common in the modern topical discourse, met with very strenuous opposition for two hundred years. It originated about 1200 A. D.; and the older clergy of that date contested it stoutly. Among others, Roger Bacon wrote against it with great severity. He prayed God to "banish this conceited and artificial way of preaching from his Church." The notion of the topical sermon which he entertained was a singular one. It lets us into the clerical life of the times significantly. He writes, "The greatest part of our prelates, having but little knowledge in divinity, and having been little used

to preaching in their youth, when they become bishops, and are sometimes obliged to preach, are under the necessity of begging and borrowing the sermons of certain novices, who have invented a new way of preaching, by endless divisions and quibblings, in which there is neither sublimity of style, nor depth of wisdom. . . . It will never do any good." Thus judged one of the wisest men of his age, of a style of preaching which has been the predominant one in this country, and specially in New England, for two hundred years, and in which are to be found the most valuable contributions to theology which this country has produced. To the foregoing facts should be added, that preaching itself, during the period of the Romish decline, gradually fell into disuse. Indolence in the priesthood, and superstition in the Church displaced the pulpit, and exalted the altar.

4th, The modern period in the history of the custom of employing texts dates from the Reformation. It is characterized by three features which deserve mention.

(1) We find a return to the ancient usage respecting the sources of texts. The unanimity of the reformers in this regard is remarkable. I have met with no evidence of a solitary instance in which any other than a biblical source was acknowledged by them in the choice of a text. The religious vitality of the Reformation is indicated in no other one thing so signally as in this backward spring from human to inspired authorities, in the search for a preacher's texts.

(2) Another feature which characterizes this period is a similar return to the ancient simplicity in the interpretation of texts. This movement was more gradual, and not universal. But the tendency of modern scholarship for three centuries has been to settle the interpre-

tation of texts on the same principles of grammatico-historical exegesis by which common sense interprets the language of any other ancient volume.

(3) A third feature by which this modern period is characterized is a variety of usage respecting the objects for which texts are employed. The etymological idea of a text is not now universal in the usage of the pulpit. Modern sermons are more than homilies. Discussion of subjects independently of texts has grown upon modern usage immensely. As familiarity with the Scriptures is extended among the people, the effect must necessarily be to throw the pulpit forward upon more elaborate discussions for the materials of sermons. Still we have not reached any uniformity of usage in reference to the objects of texts: it is to be hoped that no such uniformity will be established. We need the present diversity to meet diverse wants of the popular mind.

II. We proceed now to observe briefly some of the objections to the custom of employing texts. Of these the following are the chief. It is claimed that the custom tends to attenuate the material of a sermon. Voltaire, for this reason, expressed the wish that Bourdaloue had banished this custom from the pulpit. It is urged further that the custom tends to create pedantic methods of preaching. Sismondi, in his "History of the Italian Republics," attributes the decay of secular eloquence in Italy to the loss of clerical eloquence from the pulpit, occasioned by the priesthood in preaching from texts. Moreover, it is said that the custom tends to contract the range of the subjects of the pulpit. Vinet, in urging this objection, says very truly, "Experience is a book. Experience furnishes texts." The question is a fair one, then, Shall a preacher cramp his

experience to bring the themes of his pulpit within the range of scriptural texts? Again: it is objected that the custom tends to isolate the pulpit from the usages of secular eloquence. It is a fair inquiry, Why do not secular orators employ texts, or their equivalent? May not the proverbial dullness of a sermon be attributable, in part, to an unnatural separation between the pulpit and the bar, or the Senate, in this respect? Might not something of the vivacity of the platform be given to the pulpit, if the formula of a text were abandoned?

This suggests a further objection: that the custom tends to stiffen the routine of the pulpit. Claus Harms, in his work on "Practical Theology," expresses the opinion that this custom has been prejudicial, "not only to the perfection of preaching as an art, but also to Christian knowledge, and, what is more serious, to the Christian life." It is a reasonable query, What is to prevent the use of a text from degenerating into an utterly lifeless form? Is it not often like the address and subscription of a letter, — a form which the hearer feels to be void of meaning? If so, is it not all the worse for its inspired origin? Finally, William Lloyd Garrison urges against the custom its tendency to antiquate the pulpit. He claims that it assumes antiquity to be synonymous with authority; that it promotes silence upon existing forms of sin on the plea of fidelity to an ancient type of thought and of religious experience. In a word, it tends to give to the past a moral ascendency over the present, to which nothing in the experience of the past entitles it, and which is not commended by the example of Christ and the Apostles.

Respecting all these objections, I can not but think that something must, in candor, be conceded to them. Vinet puts the case fairly when he imagines a stranger,

unacquainted with the usages of the pulpit, and knowing only its object, as listening for the first time to a sermon, and learning that this entire department of eloquence is subjected to the rule of developing, not the idea of the speaker, but a text clipped from a foreign discourse. Would the usage, to such a stranger, appear to be a natural one? If there were not opposing advantages attending the use of texts, or even if the abuses indicated by objectors were inevitable, the custom would not be worth defending. It is not enjoined on the pulpit by inspired authority. It must exist, if at all, on its intrinsic merits. The revulsion of some minds from it is not unnatural in view of the puerilities to which it has often given rise. Still the custom will be found to be defensible on the ground that its abuses are not unavoidable, and its uses are of surpassing moment.

III. In defense of the custom of employing texts, we proceed, then, to consider the positive uses of texts. These demand consideration in a twofold aspect. They are advantages supporting the custom of employing texts: they are also objects to be aimed at in the selection of texts. That is the best text which secures the largest number, and the most vital, of the objects of having a text.

1st, Of the positive uses of texts, may be named, first, that of giving inspired authority to the sentiments of a sermon. This is the prime object of a text. This is a use which the best class of texts always does secure. This, doubtless, is the radical idea which lies at the foundation of the usage.

(1) This use of a text outweighs much objection to the custom of preaching from texts. It answers abundantly Voltaire's objection. An inspired thought is

not likely to be the material of an attenuated discourse. If the sermon be diluted, the defect is not, probably, in the text. Voltaire did not fail to appreciate the value of a pithy saying of genius as a motto of discourse. Why may not inspiration claim at least as much respect as the utterances of genius? Very much of the reverence which is silently paid by the popular mind to the pulpit is probably due to the secret educating power of this custom of the pulpit.

Again: this use of a text answers Mr. Garrison's objection. If the Bible be an inspired volume, it is inspired for a purpose. If inspired for a purpose, it is divinely fitted to that purpose. If fitted to that purpose, it is a compend of the truths most necessary to the world in all time. Distinctions of past, present, and future do not destroy its pertinence as a whole. Much more inspired truth has been uttered to men than the Bible contains. The Bible is God's selection from the accumulated archives of inspiration. Its histories, its biographies, its liturgies, its psalmody, its doctrines, its precepts, its prophecies; its pictures of character, divine, angelic, and human; the secret life with God which it portrays; and its disclosures of the eternal worlds, — all are selected fragments, put together for a purpose, like a mosaic. Such a book, framed for such a purpose, can never, as a whole, be antiquated. It can contain nothing, which, for the purposes of such a volume, can ever be obsolete. The world will always need it, and will need the whole of it. As a unit, it will be as fresh to the last man as to you and to me. This, then, is the strong point in the claim which the pulpit asserts to reverence for its usage in preaching from texts, — that they give divine authority to the sentiments of the pulpit. Yield this, and you revolutionize

the pulpit in less than one generation. The instincts of infidelity are very keen in scenting out and worrying down, if possible, a clerical usage like this, which is the most vital exponent the pulpit has of its own faith and of the popular faith in inspiration.

(2) Further, this use of a text as an inspired authority is of special value in the preaching of obnoxious doctrines. On the doctrine of future punishment, for example, it is not the argumentations of the pulpit which hold the popular mind to the truth most rigidly: it is the downright and inevitable authority of a few texts. He would be a very unwise man who should throw away his advantage in advancing to the discussion of such a doctrine under the cover of a divinely spoken word. It is more than the protection of a masked battery. This protective bearing of a text is specially assisted by the position of a text in the construction of a sermon. The text usually heads the discourse. It predisposes a reverent hearer to listen with a docile temper, if a preacher advances behind inspired leadership. Divine words first, the human teaching in the sequel: this order of thought tends to secure reverent assent.

(3) But does not this very subjection of the human to the divine, as has been suggested, hamper the freedom of the pulpit? Not at all. For we notice, further, that this use of a text encourages a regulated freedom in the pulpit. Some subjects, it is true, are not expressed in any scriptural text; but, if they are not expressed, they may be contained in a principle which is expressed. Some principles, it is true, are not affirmed in a declarative form; but they may be implied in a narrative, a parable, an act, a character which is recorded. Some subjects, it is true, are not logically contained in any such text; but they may be rhetori-

cally suggested by a text, and the text may be used by a manly accommodation to the theme. Here, we contend, is all the freedom that the pulpit needs, all that a preacher of a revealed religion has any right to desire. If a subject is not expressed in any scriptural passage, and is not contained in any scriptural principle, and is not implied in any scriptural narrative, parable, event, character, and is not, by any manly association of thought, suggested by any scriptural language, the preacher of a revealed system of truth will not waste much time in defending such a subject against the poverty of the Bible in not furnishing a text for it. It is a healthful corrective of idiosyncrasy in a preacher, that if he proposes, as an ancient pastor of the Hollis-street Church, Boston, once did, to preach on "The Morals and Manners of the Marquis de Rochefoucault," he should find himself driven out of the Bible, as the preacher was, and compelled to preach without a text.

(4) This view suggests, further, that this use of a text tends to put a preacher in his true relation to divine authority. The real character of a preacher as a minister of God, speaking for God, uttering God's words, unfolding God's thoughts, is silently kept before his own mind, and before that of his hearers. The tendency is to impart a most vitalizing spiritual influence to both, — to him, in giving; to them, in receiving. If secular orators had an inspired collection of secular themes of discourse, nothing but depravity would prevent their using it as the clergy use the Scriptures. Upon all the principles of high art in public speech, they would be dolts if they did not use it.

A curious phenomenon is observable here in secular eloquence; it is that it has, in fact, invented for itself expedients which are in some respects equivalent to the

texts of the pulpit. What is the object of indictments and other legal forms, the reading of which precedes forensic addresses? What is the object of resolutions and bills, the reading of which introduces legislative speeches? As related to secular oratory, they are designed to put the speaker at once in position with the business in hand and with his audience. When Daniel Webster rose to reply to Gen. Hayne in the United States Senate, he answered in a breath much of the harangue of his opponent, and put himself in position before his auditors, by saying, "Mr. President, I call for the reading of the resolution before the Senate." This was no more nor less than taking a text.

2d, Of the positive uses of texts, and the objects to be aimed at in their selection, the second is that of promoting popular intelligence in the perusal of the Scriptures. It is not a small benefit to a people to have a hundred passages of the Bible expounded every year from the pulpit with the aid of the latest scholarship in exegesis.

(1) Observe especially that this use of a text grows naturally out of the preaching of a revealed religion, and that the popular knowledge of such a religion will be proportioned to that of preachers in their use of texts. The popular mind obtains unconsciously its principles of interpretation from the usage of the pulpit. As the one is, so is the other. Clearness in the pulpit is good sense in the pew. Mysticism in the pulpit is nonsense in the pew. The absence of exposition from the pulpit is ignorance of the Bible in the pew. Like priest, like people. The Sabbath school, Bible classes, family instruction, under a vigorous ministry, will in the long run take character from the pulpit. The key which will wind up and keep in

movement the whole machinery of popular growth in a knowledge of the Scriptures is the handling of texts by a skillful preacher.

(2) Importance is added to this use of a text by the fact that the exposition of texts is the exposition of the choicest passages of the Bible. Well-chosen texts are the gems of scriptural thought. They represent fundamental doctrines, and vital principles, and essential duties, and central characters, and critical events, and thrilling scenes, and profound experiences. They are the dense points of revelation, at which light is most vivid. The Bible is dotted over with them. To see them is to see the whole firmament of truth in which they are set. They are constellations in a cloudless sky. An intelligent and scholarly explanation of a thousand texts might indoctrinate a people in the whole system of biblical truth.

3d, A third use of a text, and object in its selection, is to cherish in the minds of hearers an attachment to the language of the Bible. In the popular notion of religious truth, words very easily become things. Never is language more readily consolidated into a living thing around which the reverence of a people will grow, than when that language is long used to express their religious convictions, or their religious inheritance from their fathers. Therefore, if reverence be not cherished for the scriptural forms of truth, it will be for uninspired forms. The popular mind will have it for something. We are suffering to-day from a morbid attachment, in some sections of the Church, to uninspired standards of religious thought. A reverence is cherished for technicalities of theological science, and for certain forms of truth expressed in ritual and liturgic service, which nothing should receive but an

inspired production. It has been believed by more than one of the lovers of the Book of Common Prayer, that its authors and compilers were under the guidance of inspiration in their work. Views of divine superintendence have been advanced in behalf of the Westminster Confession, which involve a subordinate degree of the inspired gifts in the leaders of the Westminster Assembly. Similar ideas have been expressed concerning the works of John Wesley. A very intelligent Baptist clergyman once inquired of me if I did not believe that something very like apostolic inspiration was imparted to Robert Hall.

Why does a most excellent missionary society report its labors in a destitute section of Pennsylvania, as consisting of a distribution of Bibles and Testaments to the number of five hundred and thirty-nine, and of prayer-books three thousand two hundred and seventy? Why is it, that, in our own communion, that phraseology in theological controversy which is most hotly contested, and is deemed most sacred, because most essential to truth, in the view of the contending parties, is *not* scriptural phraseology?

This leads us to a further fact, which is that some truths can not be concisely presented to the popular mind otherwise so clearly as by the exact scriptural forms of them. The statements of the doctrine of the Trinity in many of our standards — are they not notorious failures? It has cost the pulpit infinitely more labor to explain and defend them than it would have done to explain and defend the Scriptures on that doctrine. Some such truths it will not do to define to the popular mind as we should to the scholastic mind. A definition which is metaphysically true may be practically false The connection of the race with Adam,

and the character of infants it is unwise to attempt to define to the popular comprehension beyond the very limited notices taken of either subject in the Bible. We are almost certain of coming into conflict with the necessary beliefs of men, if we make the attempt, — a thing which the Scriptures never do. Let us have this instinct of popular reverence, then, in its legitimate uses. Let us so treat uninspired formularies as to subject them, in the habits of the popular feeling, to the inspired standards, no more, and no less, and no other.

This view meets the objection to the custom, drawn from its abuse by pedantic preachers. Sismondi may have been reasonably disgusted by the pedantry of the priesthood of his day; but a scholarly care for verbal exposition of an inspired book is not pedantry. An inspired production deserves a minuteness of exegesis of which no other production is worthy. The words of the Scriptures are to the popular mind like the words of a will by which an inheritance is conveyed. The presumption is that any and every word is important, and may be emphatic.

4th, A fourth use of a text is to facilitate a hearer's remembrance of the truths presented. The best texts are brief statements of truth. They are easily remembered. Moreover, the best texts contain a comprehensive view of the whole scope of the sermons founded upon them. The most felicitously chosen texts are the sermons in miniature. The sermons are in them like an oak in the acorn. To recall them is to recall the train of thought which the sermons develop. Further: inspired language, other things being equal, impresses the memory the more strongly for being inspired. It is authoritative language. Memory is assisted by reverence for authority. Inspired language is usually of un-

common raciness. The Bible is the most brilliant book in the world, in respect of style. It abounds in sententious utterances of truth. It is a book of axioms. Its imagery is fascinating. Its style pulsates with life. It has a wonderful power to fasten itself in the human memory. The first missionaries in the South Sea Islands found that their most ignorant converts to Christianity were attracted to the Scriptures often, when they seemed to get no pleasurable or even connected ideas from "Pilgrim's Progress" or from "Robinson Crusoe."

LECTURE V.

THE TEXT: USES, SOURCES.

5th, Continuing the discussion of the positive uses of texts, we notice, in the fifth place, that a text aids in the introduction of a subject of discourse.

(1) Upon this it should be remarked, that the pulpit without texts is inferior to other departments of public speaking in facilities for introduction of themes. A speaker before a legislative body has a theme pre-announced by the bill or the resolution before the House. A speaker at the bar has a similar aid. Occasional speakers, too, have assistance in the introduction of their themes, in the fact that an occasion is usually, in some sort, a preparative to an audience for the kind of theme and of discussion which are becoming to it. But a preacher has no such facilities in any degree proportioned to the frequency of his discourses. His range of topics is almost unlimited. He is constantly addressing one audience. His hearers can have no specific preparation of mind for one religious theme rather than another, until he creates it. The danger of formality, or of sameness, therefore, in his approaches to his themes, is very great, unless he has a singularly inventive mind. Here the custom of preaching from texts comes to his aid.

(2) Moreover, the brevity of a sermon renders facility

of introduction peculiarly needful in preaching. Usage rarely tolerates more than forty minutes to a sermon, generally less than that. Utility certainly requires restriction within that time. Whitefield said that there were no conversions after the first half-hour. Yet the subjects of the pulpit demand time for discussion. A preacher often wishes that he could have the three hours of a lawyer in a court-room; and on some themes what would he not give for the nine hours which Edmund Burke once occupied, or for the four whole days which he filled in Westminster Hall at the trial of Warren Hastings? The preacher has no time for leisurely, circumlocutory approach to his theme. Anything which facilitates brevity of preliminaries is valuable. A text does this.

(3) But how does the use of a text aid in the approach to a subject? I answer, Often a text *is* the subject. When it is not such, it may suggest material for an explanatory approach to the subject. When it needs no explanation, it may suggest the best material for an introduction proper. Remarks not explanatory of the text, and yet suggested directly by the text, may lead to the theme quickly, and in a way which shall stimulate attention. Again: a text itself may be such as to awaken interest in a subject. The Rev. Horace Bushnell, D.D., late of Hartford, often insured the interest of an audience through a whole discourse by the ingenuity of his selection of a text. The instant inquiry of a hearer was, "What will he make of such a text as that?"

6th, A sixth use of a text is to promote variety in preaching. Vinet remarks, that, "in general, a text is an originality ready-made."

(1) The Bible is full of diversified original forms of

truth. It contains every variety of style known to literature. If the prime object of the biblical revelation had been to prepare a book of texts for the pulpit, a more copious variety of fresh thought could hardly have been collected in any other form. Let a preacher stamp upon his ministry the biblical impress by representative texts, unfolded by sermons which are true to their texts, and he has an absolute guaranty of a symmetrical pulpit.

(2) This leads me to remark that inspired thought often presents in a single text original combinations of truth. One of the peculiarities which a student of biblical texts first discovers in them is that their ideas do not seem to have come together at the bidding of science. No inspired author seems to have aimed at the building of a system of any thing. If a metaphysical truth is stated, it seems as if it happened to be where it is: perhaps it stands side by side with a gleam of poetry. Pure intellect and pure emotion play in and out, often, in the structure of a text, with the artlessness, yet without the incoherence, of dreams. Passages in the Epistles of St. Paul and of St. Peter, and in the visions of Isaiah, remind one of a tropical grove, so free is the growth and the undergrowth of ideas, and so versatile is the play of that which, in any other production, we should call genius. It is a sequence of this characteristic of inspiration, that biblical texts frequently present combinations of truth which are full of surprises. A single text will often be a picture in its combinations. If a preacher is sensible that his mind is exhausting itself, and that he is falling into a dull round of repetitions, which make the Sundays like the steps of a treadmill to him, let him set about the study of the Scriptures more earnestly; let him study his

texts, and select rich texts, and then preach textual sermons for a while. It will make a new man of him.

(3) This suggests, further, that the usage of preaching from texts promotes versatility of habit in a preacher's mental culture. If mind grows by what it feeds upon, a preacher's mind can not habituate itself to thinking in scriptural lines of suggestion without acquiring some degree of scriptural versatility in its own lines of thought. What it originates will resemble the stimulus it has received. The preacher's sermons will become as picturesque as his texts are.

7th, But this consideration of the use of the text in promoting variety suggests a correlative object of the custom: it is to aid in the preservation of unity in a sermon. It is true that many texts appear to be heterogeneous in material: they are not a single thesis. But, on the other hand, the large majority of texts are logically one in their structure. They invite a strictly synthetic discourse. If a paragraph of a chapter does not, a single verse may: if a verse does not, a portion of it may. It is optional with the preacher to select more or less of the inspired record. A multitude of texts give a preacher no opportunity for rambling remarks. He must abandon them utterly, if he wanders out of their logical range. They are as rigidly one as a syllogism.

But, further than this, many texts are rhetorically one which are not logical theses in form. Vinet says that there are two kinds of unity; one logical, the other psychological. The psychological unity is the unity of soul in the text as an utterance of its author, and a corresponding unity of impression on the minds of hearers. A multitude of apparently heterogeneous texts have this psychological unity. The text — "The

fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law" — is intensely one in the spirit which animates it. A preacher can not appropriate into his own mental working the aim of that text, and yet ramble into a centrifugal discourse on love, and on joy, and on peace, as themes of independent discussion. There is an aim in his text which steadies his aim in the sermon.

This suggestion is enhanced in significance by the fact that intensity of aim is characteristic of inspired thought. Intensity of aim is singleness of aim. An eager mind thinks in right lines: so an inspired mind thinks with a vigorous tension of intellect, and always for an object. Rambling thought is the work of an idle mind. The Scriptures have none of it. Hence paragraphs of inspired thought often develop the point of unity when a verse does not. A chapter may develop the point of unity when a paragraph may seem to have none. Even in those passages in which inspired emotion overflows into seemingly redundant parentheses, as is so often the case in the writings of St. Paul, we find, after all, a "*lucidus ordo*," which threads the whole. The intellectual tension which is incident to the inspired state often gives to the scriptural style a ring which reminds one of the twang of a bow-string. Fidelity to the spirit of texts in preaching, then, will secure unity of aim through the force of the sympathy of a preacher's mind with the intensity of inspired thinking and feeling.

To these views of the point before us is to be added the fact that any collection of inspired words which have neither rhetorical nor logical unity is not a text. It can not be woven into a continuous discourse. For

example, turn to the first three verses of the fourteenth chapter of Proverbs. They read thus: "Every wise woman buildeth her house; but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands. He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord; but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him. In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride; but the lips of the wise shall preserve them." Here is a continuous collection of biblical utterances; but they are not a text. They are independent proverbs. They have no unity, logical or rhetorical. They were not intended as a unit of thought by the inspired writers. No sensible preacher would force them into the attitude of a text.

The custom, then, of preaching from texts must be regarded as always tending to unity of discourse. We have no occasion to apologize for textual sermons, as Mr. Jay does. Sermons true to texts will have as real a unity as sermons on a logical thesis. Texts will invite unity of sermon, and to a good preacher will necessitate it, just as they promote variety. Variety in unity, unity in variety: this is nature, and this is the rhetorical drift of the influence of texts.

Such are the most important of the uses of the custom we are considering, and of the objects to be aimed at in the selection of texts. From these considerations it is obvious that the selection of texts is of vast moment to the power of the pulpit. It is to the pulpit what the work of adjusting the range of guns is to a battery. A false range, or a range at random, is equivalent to none. It is not an exaggerated indication of the importance of texts, that sometimes a text itself is the occasion of the conversion of a soul. This occurred under the preaching of Whitefield. In powerful revivals it is no uncommon occurrence.

The study of texts, also, which is essential to intelligent selection, is of itself one of the most healthful moral preparations to a preacher's mind for the work of constructing a sermon. It enriches his emotive nature. The tendency of it is to subdue unhallowed emotions, and to bring a preacher, as a messenger of God, into sympathy with his work as the work of God. Have we not all learned the importance of cultivating habits of mental intensity in our religious experience? The most perfect example of such intense experience that we have on record, next to the life of our Lord, is found in the working of inspired minds. That is a most wonderful law of inspiration by which thought direct from the mind of God comes to us in solution with the religious emotions of the human soul chosen for its utterance. It comes in such form, that often you can not separate the divine thought from the human feeling which embodies it. The moral individuality of the man is as intense as the truth which is communicated through him. Hence we are never sensible of distance, or of conflict, between the intellect and the heart of an inspired writer. His intellect is never chilly: his heart is never empty.

An experience closely resembling this is practicable to every preacher. It creates the perfection of preaching. The prayerful study of texts is one of the direct means of acquiring it. I think that preachers of earnest piety are more frequently sensible of intuitions which seem to them to be direct from the Holy Ghost in their selection of texts than in any other portion of their preparation for the pulpit. Whitefield, Summerfield, Edwards, Payson, — all of them recognized such hints from the Holy Spirit in their ministerial experience as of frequent recurrence. In many less celebrated in-

stances it is not so much a theme which unfolds itself richly to the mind, as it is the suggestion and opening of a text, — often sudden, and by no laws of association which the mind can detect. You will be sensible of this in your own pastoral experience, if you are eager biblical students, and intensely prayerful men. As the rainbow often gives a reflection of itself, so the promise of Christ to his disciples will seem to have a secondary fulfillment in your life: "The Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say."

If the business of selection, then, be so important to the management of texts, it may seem natural to proceed to lay down rules of selection. But we experience a difficulty in practice as soon as we attempt to subject ourselves very rigidly to rules on a subject like this. I prefer to consider the principles of selection under the general title of *inquiries*, rather than *rules*, respecting the choice of texts. This is the precise form in which the subject comes before a pastor's mind practically. It is, "Shall I choose this, or shall I choose that, for a text?" With very few exceptions, principles will require diverse applications in different cases, and our practice will often overleap them, if we have suffered them to stiffen into rules.

IV. The most important inquiries respecting the selection of texts group themselves naturally into four classes.

1st, The first of these classes relate to the sources of texts.

(1) And of these, the first is the query, May we select and use as a text an interpolated passage, or a mistranslation?

In reply, it should be observed that plausible arguments are often given in the affirmative of the question.

The convenience of such texts is frequently urged in defense of them. The text (1 John v. 7), "There are three that bear record in heaven," is a very convenient proof-text for the doctrine of the Trinity. The passage in Prov. viii. 17, "Those that seek me early shall find me," is a very useful text for a sermon on youthful piety. If homiletic reasons alone should control our usage, we should deem it a misfortune to part with these passages. Yet the first is an interpolation, and the second is a mistranslation. The latitude adopted by opponents of evangelical truth in their use of the Scriptures is also urged in vindication of such uncanonical texts. We can not afford to be scrupulous, it is said, while our opponents are not so. The failure of audiences to detect the error, if we use these texts, is further alleged in their support. Why may we not use their ignorance for their own good? Said one preacher, "In using this ignorance of my audience, I am only doing that which God does with us all. The use of human infirmity to the extent even of a deceptive silence concerning human ignorance is a principle very largely wrought into the divine administration of this world." The ostentation of correcting the accepted Bible of the people is also adduced in behalf of the larger liberty in using such passages. The Bible of the people is the English version, not the private though unanimous reading of the schools.

It is further affirmed that evil is done by disturbing popular associations with biblical language. The Bible of the people, again, it is affirmed, is King James's translation. Their faith in the whole may be impaired by the loss of their faith in a fraction. The reverent lady who declared her faith in the narrative of Jonah, saying, that, if the Bible had said that Jonah swallowed

the whale, she should have believed it, might not have borne complacently the loss of the celebrated Trinitarian interpolation in the First Epistle of St. John. We must concede, even on the ground of the largest liberty, that it is a misfortune that Christian scholarship has lost from the Bible the only literal declaration it was once thought to contain of the triune existence of the Godhead. Other passages, too, are so enshrined in the reverent associations of the people, that the loss of them would be like the loss of the ancient hymns of the Church. So strong is this feeling, — prejudice, if so you please to call it, — that Noah Webster and his successors, in the editing of his dictionary, though revolutionizing the orthography of every other kindred word in the language, did not venture to exclude the spelling of the word "Saviour" with the "u," as they should have done if they had been self-consistent. They have yielded scholarship, as they regard it, to popular reverence for a single letter. This inherited popular feeling is so powerful, that, in the judgment of many, if the reverend and scholarly authors of the "New Version," now in progress, should decide to abandon the closing ascription of the Lord's Prayer, the Church of the people probably would not accept the scholastic decision in a thousand years. Why, then, it is plausibly asked, should we be punctilious about a few uncanonical texts?

This strain of reasoning leads us to observe that some concession to the affirmative of this question is but reasonable. For instance, it is reasonable that a preacher should not needlessly obtrude the scholastic correction of these passages upon an audience. We should never go out of our way to encounter and rebuff the popular faith in them: we may be justified

in going out of our way to avoid such an encounter. A profound principle was that of our Lord respecting the tares and the wheat: it has innumerable variations. Truth bears an immense amount of association with error with less evil than human nature suffers from the convulsions necessary to a rapid rectification of the wrong. Our Saviour was an adroit preacher: he knew when to hold his peace. So may we, upon occasions, let these questionable texts alone: to do so is no violation of Christian simplicity. Further: it is obviously reasonable, that, under any circumstances, we should not *commonly* choose for texts passages which need correction. So much is to be conceded to the affirmative of the question.

But, when we are driven to face the question, the negative argument is conclusive; and this for imperative reasons. The license of using such texts without correction injures the moral and mental habits of a preacher. Whatever may be said in defense of it, it does involve an untruth. It imposes upon the faith of an audience. The audience will never know it? Perhaps so; but the preacher must know it, and, if it injures a preacher's moral tone, it must also injure his intellectual habits. Few things are so debilitating to intellect as special pleading. No man can afford, as a matter of mental discipline, to tamper with his own sense of truth.

An equally conclusive argument against the use of these texts is the hazard to a preacher's reputation. It is not true of all hearers in every audience, that they will not detect such liberties in the pulpit. It would not be safe to preach to any audience in New England on the text, "There are three that bear record in heaven," without disclosing its true character. If the

majority did not know it, an individual here and there would know it. You can bear a weak spot in your reputation as a scholar at any other point more securely than at this of biblical scholarship. One of the ablest laymen in Boston, the parishioner of one of the most scholarly pastors of New England, once turned away from him to seek direction elsewhere in biblical studies, because he had lost somewhat of his faith in his pastor's biblical scholarship. A scholar in every thing else, he was not a scholar in this; and the keen parishioner had found it out.

A third reason for the rejection of the class of texts in question is the fact, that, in an enlarged view, it is not an evil that popular ignorance of the English Scriptures should be enlightened. The mind of the Spirit is the Word, and nothing else. The inspired record is the Word, and no other. The genuine translation is the Word, and nothing different. Cautiously and reverently, but faithfully, we should transfer, if possible, the misplaced reverence of the people. Let it be affixed to the exact word of God, not to the most useful substitute; to the exact word of God, not to the interpolations of monks; to the exact word of God, not to the wisdom of King James's translators. Scholarly commentators have reason for their complaints of the pulpit in this respect. De Wette speaks the feeling of all candid commentators, in saying of the German pulpit, "It is unpardonable that preachers adhere purely to the version of Luther, so often faulty, especially in the Old Testament; and they thus preach upon a pretended biblical thought which is found nowhere in the original."

(2) A second inquiry of the class now before us is, May we select as texts passages the sentiment of

which is not inspired? These passages are of three kinds. One consists of the false sayings of wicked beings. The record is inspired of the sayings of Cain, Ahab, Saul, Herod, Judas, Satan. A second consists of false sentiments of good men. The complaints of Job, some of the arguments of Job's friends, the skeptical reasonings of Koheleth, are specimens of these. The third class consists of true sentiments uttered by men not inspired. The historical and biographical parts of the Bible abound with such passages.

These uninspired passages are a good source of texts. A good source, I say; not that they are all good texts. They constitute a large portion of the Scriptures. They are in the Bible by inspiration of record. They therefore hold a rank which an interpolation and a mistranslation do not. One who has not investigated the matter would be surprised to find how great a proportion of the Scriptures is inspired only in record. It is largely an inspired record of uninspired sentiments. These passages are a good source of texts because of the intrinsic value of the truth which many of them contain. "Who can forgive sins but God only?" was a truth uttered by men, who, in the same breath, charged our Lord with blasphemy. "Never man spake like this man" was a truth affirmed by men who had just returned from an attempt to arrest him for his destruction. "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" was said by one before whom an Apostle was on trial for his life. "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief:" "Lord, teach us to pray:" "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life,"—these, and a multitude like them, are the utterances of infirm minds struggling into truth, and for that reason may be the more valuable for the purpose of a preacher.

Again: these uninspired passages are many of them confirmed by others which are inspired. Why not prefer those inspired passages as texts? Because those which are uninspired except in record may have rhetorical advantages which the others have not. "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief:" compare this with the text, "A bruised reed shall he not break." Might not the first of these be preferable as the text of a discourse to the weak in faith? Words from the lips of a doubting disciple may carry more weight than even inspired words addressed to such a disciple.

Furthermore, many of this class of texts are valuable specimens of the working of uninspired minds. Confirmation of inspired truth may spring from uninspired sources. The "Meditations" of M. Aurelius Antoninus are the more valuable for the tacit tribute which Paganism pays in them to the spirit of Christianity. "I know thee, who thou art, the Holy One of God," was a truth exploded by conscience from the lips of a demoniac spirit; and for that reason, used as a text, it may be the more impressive. On the other hand, it is an honor to the truth of Revelation to see how falsely men will often reason for the want of it. The theory of temporal suffering advanced by Job's three friends is a grand text to illustrate the danger of illogical working in minds devoid of divine illumination.

Still further: the class of passages under consideration contain valuable specimens of unregenerate character. "Let us eat, and drink; for to-morrow we die:" where shall we find another so fit a text for a sermon on the abuses of the certainty of death? Yet it is not inspired, and it is false in sentiment. Atheism is concentrated and exploded in it. What would the

pulpit do without the text from the troubled conscience and the trembling faith of Felix: "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee"? "What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?" — where is to be found another so apt a text for a sermon on the truth that "the extreme of wickedness is the extreme of meanness"? Nothing else discloses the theory of sin like examples of it from real life. The Scriptures would be less valuable than they are for homiletic uses, if they did not abound with such extracts from the real experiences of sin. Yet they are inspired records of uninspired falsehoods.

Certain cautions, however, should be observed in the selection of texts from this source. One is that we should never use them as proof-texts of doctrine. Job, Bildad, Zophar, Elihu, Ahab, Saul are no authority for revealed truth. They often contradict each other: they commonly contradict the direct teaching of the Holy Spirit. You make a hazardous concession to infidelity, if you use such texts as proof-texts. We must employ this whole class of texts for just what they are, and no more, — an inspired record of uninspired beliefs.

A second caution is that we should not give to this source of texts an undue proportion in our sermons. The history of a ministry of ten years might surprise some preachers by its disclosure of a disproportion between inspired record and inspired sentiment in their preaching. It is one of the most insidious of the temptations of this world that sin is so attractive in its forms of speech. Wicked men are very apt to be fascinating men. Periods in history occur in which the most charming literature is infidel literature. The reading public of England ran wild over the productions of Byron, Shelley, and Thomas Moore, when their

Christian contemporaries, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey, could scarcely command a hearing. The press could not supply the demand for Lord Byron's "Don Juan," while Coleridge's "Christabel" was circulating in manuscript. Even intrinsically considered, sin is racy in its utterances. Not only do its sentiments please depraved minds; but its style is apt to allure scholarly minds, and, among the illiterate, bright minds. The most popular wit in the world is blasphemy. To the mass of men the most forcible style is profaneness. Nothing else is so sure to command a round of applause on the platform as an oath.

This element of power in the style of speech adopted by sin runs into its utterance in the Scriptures. If, therefore, we pay no heed to our choice of texts, we may find ourselves unconsciously attracted by the raciness of sin to an undue proportion in our choice of the sayings of wicked men and even of other wicked beings. One preacher I knew, who seemed to have a mania for the character and doings and words of Satan. Preaching upon them was to him a safety-valve through which he let off a secret accumulation of the profane impulse. Very many preachers discourse upon the biblical expressions and illustrations of sin more frequently than upon the utterances and examples of holiness. Set a watch upon this peril in your own ministry. Preach rather on holiness than on sin; more often on God than on man; on the rewards of piety more frequently than on the doom of guilt; and choose texts accordingly. Valuable as many of these uninspired passages are, the richest texts in the largest profusion will be found to be the direct expressions of the Holy Spirit.

A third caution respecting the passages in question is that generally, when they are employed as texts, the

fact should be named that they are not from inspired sources. This need not always be done in express terms: something may be said which implies it. It need not always be done at all. Some texts, like the words of Felix to St. Paul, would never be mistaken for inspired sentiments. But in the majority of cases these passages are on neutral ground. Their sentiment and structure do not disclose whether Solomon is the author, or Zophar. In these cases the text should not be left neutral in the minds of hearers.

LECTURE VI.

THE TEXT: FORMS, PERSPICUITY.

2d, The second class of inquiries respecting the selection of texts relate to the form of texts.

(1) Of these the first is, Must a text be a grammatical sentence? That is, must its grammatical structure be complete, so that all its words could be parsed? Good taste responds "Yes," as the general rule. It has the look of affectation to choose for a text language which grammatically considered has no sense. "Beginning at Jerusalem" was the text of a pastor in Philadelphia. Beginning what? who begins? what for? what of it? Imagine the announcement of such a fragment as the theme of a secular speaker! "As in Adam all die; —" why retain the first word, which, torn from its connections, has no meaning? Omit the first word, and have you not the more tasteful text? It is an emphatic, grammatically finished proposition. "Pastor Harms" has published a sermon on the text, "A little while." Vinet does not object to it. But I venture to place it side by side with the theme of another sermon on the text in full, by a preacher in Philadelphia, and let each speak for itself. This is the plan of the German pastor: "1. These words are cheering to the afflicted — "a little while;" 2. They maintain joy in joyful hearts — "a little while;" 3. They arouse

sluggishness — "a little while;" 4. They disturb carelessness — "a little while;" 5. They sustain those who are combating — "a little while;" 6. They strengthen the dying — "a little while." From the text in full, "A little while and ye shall not see me, and again a little while and ye shall see me," the American preacher presents this subject: "Some of the lessons to be derived from the absence of our Lord from us, and its brief duration." By the side of this what becomes of the "little while" of "Pastor Harms"? Imagine St. Paul on Mars Hill as sentimentalizing on "a little while"!

Any thing can be caricatured; the best things the most ludicrously. Yet only by caricature can we picture to the life this method of dawdling over fragments of inspired words. Imagine, then, a full-grown man, for a half-score of Sundays in succession, quiddling over the following texts, all of them inspired fragments: "The precious ointment that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard;" "Alexander the coppersmith;" "Bowels of mercies;" "The great and noble Asnapper;" "The shaking of a spear;" "A piece of the nether millstone;" "The eyelids of the morning;" "The little owl and the great owl;" "Peter's wife's mother"!

But exceptions exist, in which ungrammatical texts are admissible. They are cases in which the fragments chosen are very weighty in thought, and so well known, that they instantly suggest the complete idea. Why do we say, "The greater the truth, the greater the libel"? Why do we say, "Like people, like priest;" "Waste not, want not;" "No pains, no gains;" "Handsome is that handsome does"? These are not grammatical structures, yet good taste does not veto

their proverbial abbreviations. Why? Because of two elements in them, — their pith of sentiment and the instantaneousness with which they are understood. The thought is racy, and at the same time complete, though the form is not complete. Because of the raciness, it is pleasing to have it in a nutshell, provided that we have the whole of it.

On the same principle of taste we are pleased with certain exceptions to the general rule against fragmentary texts. Certain fragments of inspired speech are of striking significance, and at the same time so well known, that to utter them is to suggest to hearers instantly the complete idea. Such fractional texts are the following: "The glorious gospel of the blessed God;" "Without God in the world;" "Our Father, which art in heaven;" "The precious blood of Christ." These are good texts, because of their very striking significance and the instantaneousness with which they are completely understood. Their significance alone would not justify them; their completeness of idea alone would not: but the union of these two elements puts them into the same category with abbreviated proverbs. A delicate sense of propriety will enable a preacher to distinguish these exceptions, though they are somewhat numerous. The number of these exceptions suggests a caution, that, in doubtful cases, the entire passage should be cited with a repetition of the textual fragment. This is admissible in all cases, and required in some.

(2) A second inquiry concerning the form of texts is, Can any principle regulate the length of texts? Obviously no rule can be of any value on a point like this. Yet on few of the expedients of the pulpit do preachers differ more widely. All that criticism can

wisely say of it is contained in a few *memoranda*. One is, that long texts have advantages which are sometimes conclusive in their defense. They familiarize the people with the Bible. The Book of Common Prayer is justly commended on the ground that it introduces so much of inspired language into the routine of worship. Long texts, if well treated by elaborate exposition, effect the same object more instructively than the mere rehearsal of the Scriptures. Moreover, long texts promote a taste for exposition among the people, and invite a preacher to expository discourse. Prolonged texts, furthermore, are the more accordant with the original theory of the text: they are conservative of the ancient reverence for the inspired utterances.

But a second memorandum is, that short texts have advantages which should sometimes give to them the preference. They are more easily remembered than long texts. A brief message in the memory is of more worth than a long one in the ear. Short texts, again, promote unity of impression. A lengthy text is apt to have some redundant materials which must be eliminated as the sermon proceeds. The brief text more easily tallies with the range of the sermon. Further, it often promotes interest of introduction by the omission of needless exposition. Indolent composing in the introduction frequently takes the form of exposition irrelevant to the aim of the sermon. Once more: the laconic text admits of emphatic repetition in the body of the sermon. Facility of repetition in the use of a text is often a prime element in the force of a conclusion. For the reasons now noted, it is obvious that the only rule which can be wisely adopted as to the length of a text is, "Fit the text to the demands of the subject." The advantages in either direction are only

secondary; but the demands of the subject are always imperative. They will necessitate variety.

But, while this is the only rule which criticism can wisely apply, another suggestion is, that a preacher's skill in the homiletic use of the Scriptures should affect the general length of his texts. The mere heading of a sermon with a dumb block of biblical words is inane; not so the skillful handling of it with oratorical genius. Plod and drone over a text, copying lazily from your commentaries, and no style of sermonizing is more stale; but use inspiration in the spirit of an orator, speaking as if you were yourself inspired, and your preaching becomes a model of fascinating speech. A clergyman, formerly of Brooklyn, used to preach upon entire chapters. He had trained his inventive power to act in devising methods of making the Bible interesting. He had at command an inexhaustible fund of biblical information. In his sermons, he would career over an entire biblical chapter with such exhilarating comment, that, in the result, he carried an audience with him to the end of an hour without a moment of weariness. He made exegetical learning kindle with oratorical fire. It is doubtful whether any thing else than his taste for scriptural truth, characters, events, idioms, and scenery could have saved his pulpit from being overwhelmed by the irrelevant materials stored in his polyglot memory. A man who can use biblical materials thus, with oratorical, as distinct from merely exegetical, skill, may safely indulge in the use of long texts. On the other hand, the most lifeless preaching possible, and therefore in spirit the most unscriptural preaching, is that which is made up of commonplaces, drawn from concordance and commentary, on a conglomeration of biblical words.

(3) A third inquiry concerning the form of texts is, May we choose for one sermon more than one text? The leading principle which decides this question is the same with that which regulates the length of the text, — fit the text to the subject and its discussion. This, however, will of necessity require that we generally adopt but one text. We should never choose more than one text, without an obvious demand for it in the nature of the theme, or of its discussion. What constitutes an obvious demand? It must be some departure from singleness in the subject. Two or more texts should not be chosen merely for the purpose of dignifying a subject by an accumulation of inspired statements of it. The text is not the proper place for this. If the subject be one, the text should be one. Neither should two or more texts be announced for the sake of discussing two or more independent subjects in one sermon. No such discussions of independent subjects are permissible in one sermon. The law of unity forbids them.

Two or more texts may properly be chosen for a subject which is twofold, or manifold, and for which no single text can be found which covers its whole range. The late Professor Hitchcock of Amherst discussed before the Legislature of Massachusetts, in 1850, the mutual dependence of liberty, education, and religion. The subject was single, yet threefold: no corresponding threefold text in the Bible exactly expresses or suggests that threefold theme. Therefore the preacher properly announced three texts, — one for each of the leading topics of the sermon. On the same principle, double texts are often appropriate to the discussion of related truths. Certain biblical doctrines lie over against each other. They are opposites without being contradictories. If no single text suggests such a brace

of truths, two may be chosen to introduce them. Thus Professor Shedd, in a discourse designed to reconcile the benevolence with the justice of God, announced the double text: "God is love," and "God is a consuming fire." A reconciliation of the theories of St. Paul and St. James on justification may require two texts. The Rev. Bishop Huntington, preaching upon "The cross as a burden and a glory," selected these two texts: "They found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name, him they compelled to bear his cross," and "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The two dispensations of the Old and New Testaments furnish a class of themes which may require double texts. Revelation as a whole derives a dual structure from this feature in its history. The views of Job and of St. Paul on the immortality of the soul; the Mosaic and the Christian laws of the Sabbath; the Mosaic and the Christian theories of marriage; the Mosaic and the Christian theories of human servitude; the Ten Commandments, and their summary in the Christian law of love; the imprecatory Psalms, and the Sermon on the Mount, — these are examples of subjects properly treated by mutual comparison, each couple in one sermon, with two texts. In all the cases in which double texts are allowed, you will perceive that the principle of selection is simply that of necessity. It is very different from that by which a preacher chooses double texts to intensify the biblical authority for a theme, or to discuss independent themes, or to affect a homiletic singularity.

3d, The third class of inquiries concern the impression of texts upon the audience. In the very conception of it a text is a rhetorical expedient: it is no essential part of discourse considered as such. Aristotle

knew nothing of it. We employ it as an oratorical device for certain advantages, most of which consist in the direct impression of the text upon the audience. Therefore this impression gives rise to a significant class of inquiries.

(1) Of these the first is, Should a preacher restrict his choice to perspicuous texts? "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" "Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will ye die?" "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found:" "By their fruits ye shall know them:" "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand:" "Grow in grace:" "By grace are ye saved through faith," — such passages, together with the narrative parts of the Bible, the parables, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the devotional Psalms, represent the staple of texts in the ministrations of many preachers. Is it wise to confine the pulpit to so narrow a range of choice? Is it desirable to give to such passages, even an ascendency in one's range of selection?

In answer we should defend the affirmative, if we were prescribing for an itinerant ministry; for perspicuous texts have some very positive advantages. Such texts are immediately suggestive of the subjects derived from them. Often it is desirable that a theme should disclose itself to hearers instantaneously: therefore it is judicious to choose a text which needs no comment. Often suspense is the very thing which we wish to retrench: therefore we take a clear text, that the hearer may not be held aloof from the theme by the interpolation of expository preliminaries. An occasion is sometimes such as to indispose an audience to such preliminaries. A wise preacher in Connecticut, after the death of a young person by a shocking calam-

ity, at one stroke took command of the wrought-up feelings of his hearers by announcing as his text the words, "It is I: be not afraid." Make a subject thus chime in, if possible, with the mood of an audience instead of plodding through an explanation of an obscure text, before you can reach a subject.

Again: a perspicuous text may facilitate a long and intricate discussion. It may save time for such a discussion. We must watch for all fair expedients for shortening preliminaries. Ten minutes saved by the absence of an expository introduction to a sermon may save the whole force of it in its final impression upon the hearers. On those economized minutes may depend the question whether the conclusion shall fall upon interested or upon jaded sensibilities. A clear text saves, also, not only time, but the intellectual strength of an audience for a difficult discussion. If a subject must task the hearer's power of attention or abstraction, an adroit preacher will not exhaust that power by a needless expenditure of it upon the text. The tactics of military skill are the true strategy of the pulpit. Concentrate the mental resources of an audience where they are most imperatively demanded. Reserve fresh force for the critical juncture of the discussion.

Moreover, a transparent text assists the illiterate part of an audience in the comprehension and recollection of the sermon. A text plainly expressive of the theme helps an untrained mind to the understanding of much which is not transparent. If an invalid hearer loses some part of the discourse, a perspicuous text may assist him to rejoin the train of thought. It is like a beacon to one who has lost his way. Such a text, also, very obviously assists the memory of such a hearer

The remembrance of the entire sermon will often depend on the simplicity of the text. This suggests, further, that a plain text may predispose many to listen to the sermon founded upon it. You will often detect a hearer deliberately composing himself to sleep when he sees the prospect of an elaborate discussion. A wise tactician in the strategy of the pulpit will catch such imbecile listeners, if need be, with guile. Do not indulge them with a dark text suggestive of another indulgence of darkness. I have known one preacher, who, in preaching to an audience which was unusually demonstrative in its religious emotions, would always choose a sermon which had an impassioned text. His text for one such audience was, "Howl ye; for the day of the Lord is at hand." You will find yourselves driven by pastoral fidelity to invent expedients for breaking up habits of somnolence in a certain class of hearers. By a law of our nature we grow fond of anodynes to which we become habituated. May not this account for the attachment of certain attendants upon the worship of the sanctuary to pastors whose sermons they certainly do not hear? A faithful preacher will deem nothing beneath his care which may predispose infirm minds to listen to his discourses.

Still another advantage of a clear text is that it brings biblical authority to the front at the outset of a discussion. This supreme object of a text is achieved most readily by one which is easily understood. Texts which unequivocally affirm unwelcome doctrines may sometimes be made to capture a hearer's convictions or sensibilities before prejudice has time to rally. A plain declaration of God's word forbids cavil. An adroit preacher will thus forestall cavil, at times, by blocking its way with such a text. "My text is found in Mark

xiv. 21: 'Good were it for that man if he had never been born.' Who, then, can believe that Judas has been in heaven these eighteen hundred years?"—such were the text and introduction of a certain discourse on the future punishment of the wicked.

Such advantages as these have been the inducement to some homiletic writers to advise the selection of transparent texts only. Probably the same reason led to the adoption, by the Fathers, of the *περικοπή* of texts, and to the restriction of the range of choice in some of the Reformed churches to the scriptural lesson for the day. But such limitations presuppose a low state of culture in the popular mind. For the necessities created by the advanced culture of our own times, obscure texts have advantages which often offset those of perspicuous texts. The discussion of an obscure text, if well constructed, promotes popular knowledge of the Scriptures. An obscure text understood is so much added to the common stock of biblical information. If we always avoid such passages, out of regard to the wants of infirm hearers, one of the objects of having a text is lost. Some persons in every congregation are not students. They do not read commentaries. Their reading of the Scriptures is not very intelligent. Their daily devotional reading of the Bible is largely routine: they estimate its value, often, by the quantity read, rather than by the thoughts appropriated. For solid growth in scriptural knowledge they depend upon the ministrations of the pulpit. A considerate pastor will care for this class of souls by often choosing texts, which, when explained, will be some addition to their scriptural ideas. After many days, you may find the bread you have thus cast upon the waters in the good service which such a text performs in the meditations

of a Christian on his death-bed. Other things being equal, therefore, an obscure text is preferable to a perspicuous one in a stationary ministry, for the opportunity it gives for enlarging the range of biblical thought in the experience of many hearers. On this ground Bishop Horsley advocated and sustained by his own practice the frequent selection of difficult texts. In his pulpit he thus put himself at the head of a Bible class.

Again: an obscure text often facilitates a gradual approach to the subject of a discourse. Is it an argument for a plain text that it discloses the subject at once? True; but sometimes it is not desirable to disclose the subject at once. A prudent speaker will sometimes count it a misfortune to have the subject foreseen at a glance by its reflection from the text. If sometimes it is wise to overawe cavil by a biblical command to accept an obnoxious doctrine, at other times it may be wiser to conceal the obnoxious doctrine till certain prefatory remarks have quickened the interest of a hearer in it. In such a case a text which by its transparency tells the whole story defeats itself. The text, "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth," leaves a preacher no leeway for suspense in announcing the theme of "The Decrees of God." But Dr. Emmons approaches a branch of that subject more ingeniously from the text, "Except these abide in the ship, ye can not be saved." The text, "The wicked shall be turned into hell," gives inevitable foresight of what the subject is to be. But the same subject might be derived legitimately, yet gradually, from the parable of the house built on the sand. In the choice of a text, we must often strike the balance between opposing advantages. The same weights are not always in the same scale.

Further: an obscure text tends to interest the more cultivated hearers. If invalid minds may be benefited by facile texts, robust minds are on the alert for an object of intellectual interest. Such minds will grapple with a difficult discussion, will be attracted by a difficult text. One of the practical perplexities of preaching on the text, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" is the intellectual disappointment which thoughtful hearers feel at the announcement of that which promises them no intellectual refreshment. Have you not been sensible of this in listening to sermons upon that passage? It is one of the most difficult texts in the Bible on which to construct an interesting discourse.

This suggests that an obscure text furnishes a favorable mode of training to reflective habits the less cultivated hearers. A certain class of hearers are unreflecting, not from mental weakness, but from want of culture. One of the multifarious aims of a preacher should be to elevate this class of minds. The pulpit is the chief educating power to them. Yet they need a considerate pulpit. Specially do they require a training which shall associate genially their intellectual aspirations with their religious emotions. In practical life pastors are embarrassed by the antagonism which exists, in the popular convictions, between intellect and piety. You will soon encounter this antagonism in some form. You will find the presumption lurking in the minds of some of your most excellent hearers that a very intellectual thing can not be a very religious thing. It is a pernicious error: few to which the popular mind is exposed are more so. Yet you will never succeed in removing it, except by elevating such minds to a higher level of culture.

One method of inducing this state of improved culture is to take advantage of the reverence of your hearers for the word of God, their awe in view of its mysteries, their faith in the value of its unexplained obscurities, and their consequent desire to know more of its meaning. Take advantage of the assemblage of moral feelings which gather around the Bible, and make them tributary to the intellectual training necessary to the understanding of the Bible. Preach, therefore, often on obscure texts. One thing which has sustained theological thinking among the common people of Scotland is the taste for elaborate and argumentative exposition, which has been cultivated by the Scottish pulpit. A profound principle of tactics in the education of a people by the pulpit is contained in this advance of intellectual culture in alliance with the moral affections.

Such are some of the advantages of obscure texts. A pulpit which recognizes progress in the education of the masses, and therefore aims to keep itself at such a height that it can be an educating power to the masses, must admit discussions of the obscurities of revelation. Yet such discussion may be abused. Therefore it is desirable to observe certain cautions respecting the choice of obscure texts.

One caution is that we should not choose an obscure text unless we are confident that we can make it plain. Not only should we ourselves understand it, but we should be able to make our audience understand it. A positive evil is done, if we drag into view a scriptural obscurity, and, after a bungling exposition, leave it as we found it. Another caution is that we should not select a dark text, when to make it intelligible would require a disproportionate amount of the time allotted to the sermon. A discussion of a theme should not be

cramped in order to unfold an unmanageable text. A third caution is, that we should not choose a very obscure text for a very simple subject. Some passages when explained are reduced to an exceedingly simple meaning, yet the process of explanation is difficult and prolonged. Many of the most valuable religious sentiments of the Old Testament are but hints of the same sentiments recorded more luminously in the New Testament. To evolve them from the texts of the Old Testament may be a laborious process, yet some simple texts of the New Testament may have rendered them familiar to hearers of to-day. A text is never designed for a display of ingenuity in extorting a sentiment from it. The text is made for the subject, not the subject for the text.

A fourth caution is, that we should not choose obscure texts in such proportion as to misrepresent the simplicity of the Scriptures. Some preachers have a mania for exposition. A difficult text is a treasure to them, of value proportioned to its obscurity. Archbishop Whately, if one may judge from his published sermons, was inclined to a disproportioned treatment of the difficulties of the Bible. It is not wise to be eager to array these before the people from the pulpit.

I consider thus at length the question of perspicuous and obscure texts, because it is fundamental to the whole subject of the degree of intellectuality which should be cultivated in the pulpit. We need to correct those traditions of the pulpit respecting it which do not recognize progress in popular intelligence; and yet no sweeping principles can be safely adopted against them. A certain average of regard for conflicting interests must be aimed at, and this may not be the same in the experience of any two pastors.

LECTURE VII.

THE TEXT: EMOTION, DIGNITY, NOVELTY, PERSONALITY.

(2) THE second inquiry which concerns the impression of texts upon an audience is, Ought we to select texts of elevated emotional character? These have been termed by homiletic writers "promising texts." It was an ancient homiletic rule that such texts should not be chosen. The aim of the rule was to insure simplicity in all the labors of the pulpit. Care to make preaching elementary has been the burden of a vast amount of homiletic advice.

In sympathy with this view it must be conceded that serious difficulties attend the management of emotional texts. One of these is the obvious danger of exciting expectations which the sermon will disappoint. Take, for example, such passages as the following: "Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani:" "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" "They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." These passages a preacher can not read appropriately without the suggestion of sublime emotions. An audience may naturally anticipate from them splendid discourses. The grand text needs to be buoyed up by a grand sermon

Will any sermon equal such texts? This difficulty is aggravated by the incongruity between an impassioned text and the quiescent state of an audience when the text is announced. Hearers are generally unexcited when a preacher rises to utter his text. Such passages as we are considering come upon them suddenly. The transition is abrupt. Can even inspired passion command instantaneous sympathy?

Another difficulty of such texts is, that they invite a preacher into an impassioned introduction. The tendency is to produce a strain to lift the introduction to the level of the text. Therefore eloquent description, or impassioned appeal, or richly-wrought imagery may be thrust into the preliminary portions of a sermon, where such composition is very rarely natural. So much the more prodigious, then, is the labor devolving upon the preacher of sustaining such an impression by a corresponding splendor in the sermon. If a man begins with the sunrise, he must rise to the meridian.

And this suggests the danger of bombast in a futile attempt to equal promising texts. Some passages of the Scriptures no uninspired mind can imitate. No preacher can describe the New Jerusalem as St. John has described it. Preachers become turgid when they imitate the old prophets in denunciatory discourse. They appear effeminate when they struggle to copy the beauty or the pathos of certain biblical appeals. They still more frequently make the pulpit ridiculous by prolonging and improving upon scriptual imagery.

These are real difficulties in the treatment of such texts. Yet it must be said, on the other hand, that promising texts can not always be dispensed with. One reason is that they form the most significant portions of God's word. Are we never to preach upon the

biblical descriptions of the judgment, of heaven, of hell? Moreover, some subjects are not congenial with an unpretending text. Some of the themes of the pulpit are intrinsically grand, awful, overpowering: others are plaintive, beautiful, exquisite. These qualities are ingrained in the subjects. The one class, if presented becomingly, must be discussed in bold, impassioned style: the other class, if discussed tastefully, must appear in elegant words, with elaborate imagery, leaving a gorgeous impression. With or without texts, subjects have these varieties of nature. They need congruous texts. Good texts on immortality are not numerous in the Scriptures. Shall a preacher content himself with the language of Christ to his disciples, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul," in order to evade the grand text, "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. . . . Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory"?

Furthermore, some occasions demand eloquent texts. Occasions occur on which a preacher must make a great effort. The theme must be great, the sermon great, and the text on a level with both. Dr. South, when he preached before Charles the Second on the anniversary of the "martyrdom of King Charles the First of blessed memory," struck the key-note of the sympathies of his audience by a text taken from the narrative of the early barbarism of the Hebrews, recorded in the Book of Judges: "And it was so that all that saw it said, There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day: consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds." There are occasions on which

text, subject, sermon, prayer, hymns, the tunes, and, it may be, the very drapery of the pulpit should be suggestive of an extraordinary event. Every thing must be becoming to such an occasion: whatever is not so will jar upon the wrought-up sensibilities of the hearers.

These reasons are conclusive for the admission of promising texts into the pulpit. Yet, as they are liable to abuse, we have occasion to remember certain cautions in the use of them. One is, that they should not be the exclusive favorites of a preacher. Eloquent texts, often chosen, degenerate in the popular esteem. A preacher gains a name for grandiloquence, which is transferred unjustly to his favorite Scriptures. Another caution is, that we should guard against the dangers incident to the treatment of promising texts. Those dangers, though real, are not inevitable. If a preacher is self-possessed under the inspiration of his text, he will use *it:* he will not suffer it to use *him.* Practically a preacher's good sense will regulate his use of this class of texts.

(3) Certain suggestions concerning the impression of a text upon an audience arrange themselves under the general inquiry, What is essential to the dignity of a text? Is not all inspired language of sufficient dignity for the pulpit? No; not when isolated as a text. In the third chapter of Lamentations, verse sixteenth, occurs the text, "Gravel-stones." Is this a dignified text? It suggests the rule that the dignity of a text requires that it shall not be restricted to a single word. One of the ancient preachers delivered a sermon on the word "But." We can conceive of an ingenious discourse on this very significant particle, yet it is a very insignificant text. What shall we say, then, of the selection of such words as "Remember,"

"Rejoice," "Repent," "Jehovah," "Sabbath," "Faith," "Anathema," "Christ," "Verily," "Charity"? They all fall under the same condemnation. Fruitful as they are of suggestion, it is an affectation of smartness to choose them as texts. What shall we do, then, if the significance of the word "Christ" or "Jehovah" is the theme of the sermon? Take a passage in which the word occurs, announce a grammatical section of it, and then limit attention to the word by the proposition. Any other method is unnatural. No matter how solemn the selected word may be, it is not impressive if so announced as to appear artificial.

In the same line of remark lies the more general principle, that texts should not be mutilated for the sake of giving them a forced pertinence. Homiletic authorities present abundant examples of this error. Generally they are miserable attempts at facetiousness. We need not debate them. It was unworthy of Dr. South to preach to a corporation of tailors on the text, "A remnant shall be saved." The good sense of every man condemns this, and the reverent feeling of every Christian pronounces it beneath the dignity of the pulpit. Yet, in the principle which underlies it, it is not more objectionable than the indulgences of some more sober preachers. For example, one preacher discourses on the text, "There is no God." This is inspired language, but it is not inspired thought. Another has a discourse on the text, "Be ye angry;" the design of the discourse being to show the duty of a virtuous indignation. But this is not the inspired design. Chrysostom's sermon on excessive grief at the death of friends is from the text, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not." But this is not the

apostolic injunction. In condemning this abuse of texts, good sense echoes the verdict of good taste.

Such abuses of texts as these very naturally excited the disgust of Voltaire at the whole custom of using texts. The papal pulpit had been full of such impertinences. They were so characteristic of preaching at the height of the papal corruption, that it became a proverb, adopted from one of the early cardinals, to exclaim, if one happened to hit upon a happy travesty of the Scriptures, "Good for the pulpit! keep that for a sermon!"

There is one apparent exception to this principle, which is not a real one. It is where a passage is retrenched by elision, and yet is a pertinent text, because the fragment chosen does not depart from the spirit of the whole. "By grace are ye saved" is a good text, because the fragment, and the passage from which it is taken lie on the same plane and in the same line of thought. There is, then, no mutilation of the passage, and no want of dignity in the text. The exception is only apparent; and it represents a large class of fragmentary passages, which are perfectly good texts.

Yet again: it is essential to the dignity of texts that they should not be such as to suggest low or ludicrous associations. The following are examples from the extant literature of the pulpit, — "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on?" "The bellows are burned:" "There was no harm in the pot:" "Ye are straitened in your own bowels:" "Moab is my wash-pot:" "A jewel of gold in a swine's snout:" "The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire." These are biblical. Sermons have been preached upon them; but they are beneath the dignity of the pulpit.

That inspiration has recorded them is no evidence that inspiration authorizes the use of them as texts. The proprieties of location are every thing here. A passage in its place in the inspired record may fit into the picture of inspired meaning, with its oriental surroundings; but it does not follow that the passage is a becoming text for an occidental pulpit.

This suggests that the dignity of a text requires that it be not such as to violate modern and occidental ideas of delicacy. Dr. Watts endeavored to versify for public worship some passages from the Song of Solomon. But the good taste of the Church has silently dropped nearly every one of those lyrics. They are stored in our older hymn-books; but no pastor offers them, and no choir nor audience uses them for purposes of song. The elder Puritan taste luxuriated in that portion of the Scriptures as a source of texts; but an advanced culture is much more discriminating in the selection, and wisely so. Many of the most intense passages of that *epithalamium* are exquisitely beautiful in their places as parts of an Eastern bridal-song; but those same passages, isolated from their surroundings, and exalted as texts, to be scrutinized by modern and occidental criticism, are simply repulsive. That is not a fastidious taste which is offended by them. That is no affectation which avoids them.

(4) The relation of a text to an audience suggests the further inquiry, What principles should govern a preacher respecting the choice of novel texts? In reply, it should be observed that the pulpit has some standard texts. "Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth:" "What shall I do to be saved?" "I pray thee have me excused:" "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian:" "Go thy way for this

time:" "Now is the accepted time,"—these and a large number of the same class contain themes which are nowhere else so pithily expressed. They seem as if they had been fore-ordained primarily for use in the discussion of those themes in the pulpit. It would be affectation to avoid these standard texts, for no other reason than that they are familiar to all. Every faithful preacher must employ them, though every faithful preacher of much experience before him has done the same. They are among the jewels of the pulpit. Diamonds are never obsolete.

Yet, on the other hand, a large proportion of sermons should be upon unhackneyed texts, and this for several reasons. Some of the advantages of obscure texts are, also, advantages of novel texts. Especially are novel texts desirable, often, for the sake of the interest they excite. True, the interest of novelty is not the most profound, but it may be the forerunner of a more valuable interest. George Herbert said, "Nothing is small in God's service." One of the most masterly successes of the pulpit is that of freshening an old story. Other things being equal, a novel text is an element in this power. A novel text is a new voice. The novel text, like an obscure text, may also promote exposition of the Scriptures. Often it will be an obscure text, and will demand exposition. If it is not obscure, the announcement of it is an addition to the scriptural knowledge of many; and, if it be a striking passage, it may add to their materials of scriptural meditation for a life-time.

Furthermore, novel texts promote variety in preaching. We need a broad range of biblical authorities, as we need a broad range of themes. Monotony of thought in the pulpit often results, as we have seen, from

monotony of textual selection. Moreover, a strange text will often facilitate permanence of impression. It is a law of mind that a truth is apt to be deepened in its impression upon us, if it comes to us from an unexpected source. A profane man who happens to utter an acknowledgment of the value of prayer moves us by his commonplace thought as no preacher could. It is not so much the greatness as it is the worldliness of statesmen which often renders their trite and jejune tributes of respect to Christianity as solemn to us as proverbs of religious wisdom.

The principle here involved is very strikingly illustrated in the deduction of themes from unexpected texts. A listener often expresses the impression which a sermon has made upon him by saying, "I did not know there was any such text in the Bible." Such a remark means more than it says. It means, "That sermon has affected me: its truth I feel. That text has disclosed it to me, — a gem of truth which I never saw before. I shall remember the sermon for the sake of the text." Dr. Bushnell's sermon on the theme, "Every man's life a plan of God," is a striking sermon in itself. It will be remembered by many for the sake of the subject, but by some for its deduction of such a subject from an unwonted source, the text being the address of Jehovah to Cyrus, in Isaiah's vision: "I girded thee, though thou hast not known me." Compare this with the more common texts, "Without me, ye can do nothing," or, "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth."

Dr. Bushnell's sermon on unconscious influence is another instance of the same kind. No one would forget the sermon, who had observed its ingenious yet apt

derivation from a text which perhaps was never preached upon before: "Then went in also that other disciple." Compare this with the standard text on the influence of Christians, "Ye are the light of the world; a city that is set on a hill can not be hid;" or the common text for a sermon on the evil influence of the wicked, "One sinner destroyeth much good." Dr. South's sermon against extemporaneous prayer must have gained some force from the novel aptness of his text, "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God." Compare this with the text so often employed in defense of a liturgy, "After this manner, therefore, pray ye."

Once more, an unhackneyed text invites effort on the part of a preacher. It stimulates his mind in the composition of a sermon as it does the hearer in listening to the sermon. He is aroused by an object in the early part of his work in constructing the discourse. This you will find to be often of great moment in the labor of habitual composition. Do we never listen to discourses which are pointless, and are preached with no enthusiasm, till the conclusion approaches, when they change signals, and become luminous with oratorical fire? The preacher has seemed to construct and develop his sermon with no object which aroused him early in his work. His thoughts have not been intense; his transitions have not been ingenious; his style has not been vivid, till the peroration has begun to loom up; and then "he mounts up on wings, as an eagle." Such discourses often flow from an indolent use of a hackneyed text. The preacher, acting under the chill of professional routine, has allowed himself to be beguiled into a hackneyed strain of remark. He does not wake up, and put his invention to the task, and his pen to its speed,

till the application of his theme makes him conscious of an object. He has not started enthusiastically: therefore he plods lifelessly. For the foregoing reasons, without subjecting ourselves to any rule respecting novelty of texts, we may wisely adopt the principle, that while we recognize some standard texts, yet, other things being equal, an unhackneyed text is preferable.

(5) One inquiry remains to be considered of that class which concerns the impression of texts upon the audience. It is, May a preacher choose texts which to an audience will seem to be personal? By personality in a text is meant a significance which applies it palpably to any individual, be he preacher or hearer. This is another of the topics on which only principles, not rules, can be laid down. It is obvious that a peacher should not avoid pungency in his choice of texts. That would be a timid caution which would prompt a preacher to do this through fear of seeming to mean somebody. But, on the other hand, it is equally obvious that a preacher must not, in the choice of texts, disregard the claims of courtesy. That is a selfish boldness which abuses the liberty of the pulpit by making it the medium either of egotism or of insult. Our Saviour and the Apostles were gentlemen in their preaching.

The most objectionable forms of personality in texts will be avoided by attention to a very few simple principles. One is that of avoiding a violent accommodation of texts. A very large proportion of those instances of textual personality which make up in part the fund of clerical anecdote consist of an extreme license of accommodation. Scriptural language is wrested, not only from its own proper sense, but from all good sense. The significant passages of the Bible, which are usually

chosen as texts, are not so framed as to strike individuals alone. They have a range of shot: they cover classes of men. A preacher may aim them at an individual; but they reach an individual as the representative of a class. Hence violence must be done to them to give them a significance which shall apply them to an individual alone.

Let us test this by one or two examples. The subject is of some importance as affecting the whole range of clerical impertinence. Many years ago, a man residing in West Springfield, Mass., was buried by the caving-in of a well. He remained for some hours in a perilous condition, and was rescued in the last stages of exhaustion. On the following Sabbath the Rev. Dr. Lathrop, pastor of the Congregational Church in the town, announced as his text, "Look . . . to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged." This was one of the mildest forms of a personal text. The man referred to probably did not faint under it. But how does it strike a thoughtful hearer as an application of the word of God? Was it a manly use of inspired language?

A certain pastor lost his popularity with his people, and they refused to pay his salary. He sued them for it, and gained the suit. They, in revenge, paid him in coppers. He, in rejoinder, preached a farewell sermon on the text, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil." This was a Roland for an Oliver; but was it a dignified treatment of the Scriptures? The vast majority of cases of personality in the choice of texts are just such violent applications of biblical words by an abuse of accommodation. Let a preacher preserve a manly habit in the accommodation of texts, and he will not be betrayed into such distortions.

A due regard for a second principle will protect a

preacher against improper personalities in the choice of texts: it is that such freedom with the Scriptures is founded on a false theory of clerical influence. Real power in a clergyman is essentially solemn and affectionate. Those elements in a man's ministry which appeal to conscience and to the sense of kindness are the chief sources of the strength of his pulpit. Without these, he may gain notoriety, but not influence. Such influence as he may seem to gain is not clerical in its nature. Therefore to him it is worse than none. A man who establishes a reputation for personality, oddity, or buffoonery in the pulpit, does just so much against his reputation, and therefore against his usefulness as a Christian preacher. He establishes a kind of influence of which he can not but feel ashamed when he is clothed, and in his right mind, and begins to aim at the conversion of souls. By his buffoonery he has done a work which he must undo, before he can successfully approach men who are inquiring what they must do to be saved, or men who are in affliction, or men who are on a deathbed. Yet these are among the classes of our congregations whose instincts about a preacher are the most unerring test of his clerical influence. It is a curse to a minister to have an influence founded on qualities which are repellant to the sympathies of such minds. No preacher can afford to support the reputation of having more grit than grace. A clergyman was once settled in one of our cities, of whom an intelligent lawyer, not a Christian man, used substantially this language, "I admire my pastor. He is a tingling preacher, witty, eloquent, severe. He is not afraid of a laugh in his audience. I am willing to pay largely to retain him, and so are we all. But if I were in affliction, or were about to die, he is the last man I should

want to see then." Such a criticism, if well founded, should annihilate a pastor. What must the Saviour think of him! We can not too earnestly remind ourselves that clerical influence may be easily sacrificed to clerical notoriety. And no two things are more unlike.

A third principle, which, if properly regarded, will protect a preacher from certain forms of impertinent personality in his choice of texts, is that modesty is a power in a public man. A genuine modesty will prevent a preacher from thrusting himself immoderately, or in an untimely way, upon the attention of his hearers. Tact is needed to strike always the right line of procedure in this respect. It was not a clerical impropriety in an aged clergyman in Worcester County, Massachusetts, whose son was ordained as his colleague, to preach at the ordination upon the text, "He must increase; but I must decrease." A favorite and becoming text for sermons of pastoral reminiscence, in which after a quarter or half century of service, pastors may properly speak of their own labors, is, "Having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day."

The modesty of these personal texts is obvious. Is it as obvious in the text of the young preacher, who in a farewell sermon, after a ministry of three years, preached upon the words, "Remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one, night and day, with tears"? Was there not an intolerable impudence in the personality of the following instance? An evangelist of considerable reputation was invited to preach in a certain place; and the reason urged for his acceptance was that the pastor had outlived his influence, and the people were in a distracted state. The evangelist came, and commenced his work

with the text, "Without me ye can do nothing." Against all such impertinences a preacher is protected by simply remembering that modesty is itself a power in a public man.

One other principle, which will also tend to shield the pulpit from a perverted personality in texts, is that a preacher has no right to invade the privacy of domestic life. The clergy need sometimes to be reminded of the old maxim of English law, that every man's house is his castle. As a preacher, a man may not say every thing which as a pastor he may say. As a pastor, a man is the personal friend of his people. He goes into their homes, and there may speak in all fidelity truths which it would be impudence to utter in his pulpit. Again: as a preacher, a man may utter in the body of a sermon things which he may not say in a text. It may be a stretch of his authority to accommodate a text to a hearer, so that, because it is a text, it shall stick to him like a label to a man in a pillory. But the most offensive errors of this kind are those in which a preacher chooses texts by which he invades the sanctity of his own home by foisting his private affairs upon the notice of his people. A pastor in Massachusetts made the Scriptures the medium of his rudeness of culture by preaching, on the Sabbath morning after his marriage, from the text, "Two are better than one;" and, on the Sabbath after the birth of his child, from the text, "Unto us a son is given." No man who is fitted for the pulpit in other respects will be guilty of such blunders as these; but perversions in which the principle is the same, any preacher is liable to, whose self-respect does not unite with his reverence for the Scriptures to prevent his indulgence of a frivolous or a rude taste in his selection of texts.

LECTURE VIII.

THE TEXT: PERTINENCY, COMPLETENESS, ACCOMMODATION.

4th, We have thus considered the sources of texts, and the form of texts, and the relation of texts to the audience. Let us now advance to a fourth class of inquiries, which concern the relation of a text to the main body of a sermon.

(1) Of these the first is, On what principles shall we judge of the pertinency of a text? Pertinency to the sermon is the most vital quality of a good text. Vinet says that no human book has been so tortured and jested with as the Scriptures have been by preachers in their choice of texts. With equal justice, he charges the Romish pulpit with having been specially culpable in diminishing thus the respect due to the word of God. Protestant usage has been corrupted to a greater extent than is commonly imagined by the relics of Romish levity in the treatment of the Bible. Yet a very large proportion of these abuses would have been prevented, if a manly taste had protected the single excellence of pertinency between text and theme.

Let it be observed, then, that the pertinency of a text relates chiefly to congruity of sentiment between text and theme. A perfect text will express exactly the subject of the sermon, no more, and no less. Con-

gruity of sentiment, then, may be sacrificed in several ways. It is sacrificed by the selection of a text which does not contain the subject, either expressly, or by implication, or by natural suggestion. For example, one clergyman — the author, by the way, of a treatise on preaching — has a sermon on education, the text of which is, "Thou shalt not steal." An English preacher selected as his text the words, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men," and then proceeded to announce his subject, which was, "to examine the doctrines of Calvin as laid down in his Institutes." A French preacher selected the text, "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art, that judgest;" and from these words he professed to derive the subject of capital punishment. These are flagrant cases of incongruity, but in principle they are the same with the entire class of texts, which, by misrepresentation, are made to introduce a theme which is foreign to their real meaning. A text foreign to the subject is no text.

Again: the pertinency of a text is sacrificed where the text contains the subject, but not the proposition; that is, where it contains a different aspect of the subject from that which the sermon discusses. Some preachers are fond of making a text and a proposition seem to contradict each other. One preacher discourses on the perseverance of the saints, designing to vindicate the doctrine; but he adopts as his text the words of St. Paul to the Galatians, "Ye are fallen from grace." Dr. South has a sermon on the truth that "Good Intentions are no Excuse for Bad Actions;" but the text is, "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted, according to that a man hath." These are frivolous uses of the inspired thought: the remote consequences of them may

be more serious than the immediate evil. One abuse invites another: one abuse justifies another. The principle of a slight abuse is the principle of an extreme abuse. The moment we abandon common sense in interpretation, we abandon all sense which can command respect. The mystical uses of the Scriptures advocated by Origen and Augustine, and revived by Swedenborg, are the logical result of some of the homiletic usages adopted by preachers in the choice of texts.

Furthermore, the pertinency of a text is often sacrificed by the choice of a general text for a specific subject. "Grow in grace" is not a good text for a sermon on humility. "They went out and preached that men should repent" is not a good text for a discourse on encouragements to repentance. A more pertinent text would be, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." On the same principle, the passage, "They shall be my people, and I will be their God," is not a pertinent text for a sermon on the sympathy of God with his people. Saurin has a sermon on this theme from a far better text, because more specifically expressive of the theme: "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye." This text thrills the hearer with its image of the subject.

We should observe, however, that a specific text for a specific theme is not always practicable. Some subjects are not specifically named, or implied, or suggested, in the Scriptures. For such themes we are compelled to choose a general text; that is, an inferior text. Still this quality of pertinency of sentiment is the crowning virtue of a text: it should never be needlessly sacrificed or impaired. Many preachers habitually choose unsuggestive texts. They seem to think that any thing

will do for a text, if the subject has even a remote connection with it. On the contrary, a reverent preacher, and a live man in the pulpit, will aim to make a text, if possible, strike a good blow for his conclusion.

But pertinency in a text is not restricted to the sentiment. It relates, also, to congruity of rhetorical structure between the text and the sermon. Is there not, to the eye of good taste, an incongruity between a very imaginative text and a severely argumentative discourse? Do we not feel a similar infelicity between a difficult logical text, and a hortatory address? Neither an argumentative nor a hortatory address on the duty of religious conversation with impenitent men would very congruously follow the text, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." Pertinency of rhetorical structure is one of the secondary excellences of a text. Often it is not practicable. We should not subject ourselves to a rule requiring it: still it is a beauty where it is attainable, and very many themes of the pulpit admit of variety of choice in this respect. Let me illustrate this. Here is a hortatory text, "Fear not them which kill the body." Here is a historic text, "And, when he had said this, he fell asleep." The following is an exclamatory text, "O Death! where is thy sting?" This is an argumentative text, "There remaineth, therefore, a rest to the people of God." Another is a didactic text, "Into thy hand I commit my spirit." We have a text of soliloquy in the passage, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." From all these texts might be derived, either by logical deduction or by natural suggestion, the subject of a good man's peace in death. Yet it is not difficult to see that a keen sense of rhetorical pertinency would require some

reference, in the selection, to the rhetorical character of the sermon.

But pertinency in a text is not confined to congruity of sentiment and of rhetorical structure: it relates, also, to congruity of the associations of the text with the object of the sermon. The associations of a text should, if possible, be such as to aid the subject of the sermon. This kind of congruity will be best understood by some illustrations of the want of it. A preacher discoursed upon the exalted rank of the redeemed in the future world, and he chose for his text the words, "Ye shall be as gods." Here the subject is above the text, and the associations of the text tend to drag down the subject to a level with the work of devils. An evangelist in the State of New York preached upon the solemnity of the close of a protracted meeting, and selected as his text the dying words of Christ, "It is finished." Such conceits as these degrade texts into connections with themes which can not by any ingenuity be forced up to a level with the texts. Apologies for such uses of texts should go for nothing. We should not be deceived, if we can palliate them plausibly. They are deformities, often monstrosities, however blandly or reverently we may disguise them in an apologetic introduction.

Observe, now, how the associations of a text may aid a subject by the force of sympathy with it. You wish to preach a discourse on diligence in the Christian life, and you select as a text the words expressive of the youthful awakening of Christ to his life's work, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" You wish to preach a sermon to Christians on neglect of prayer, and you adopt the words of Christ in the garden, "What! could ye not watch with me one

hour?" You wish to preach on the forgiveness of injuries, and you take as your text, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Would not the associations of these texts be auxiliary to the object of the sermons? I have said that this congruity of association should be obtained, if possible. Sometimes it is not possible. We can not, therefore, prescribe any rule of universal application. We can only say that the congruity of association is an excellence in a text, when it is practicable.

(2) A second inquiry concerning the relation of a text to the body of a sermon is, What principles apply to the regulation of incompleteness and redundancy in texts?

In answer, let it be observed that good taste requires that a text should comprise no less material than is discussed in the sermon. The text should, in some natural development of thought, cover the whole area of a sermon: it should not be a patch upon the fabric Dr. Emmons has a discourse on the being and perfections of God. You observe the subject is of the most general kind: it suggests a broadcast discussion. But what is the text? Is it an equally comprehensive passage, like the words of Jehovah to Moses, "I am that I am;" or the words of the Psalmist, "Know ye that the Lord he is God?" Not these, but the argumentative passage from St. Paul to the Hebrews, "Every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God." Why is not this a perfect text? Because it covers but a portion of the theme. It is an admirable text for a sermon on the being of God as proved by the argument from design; but for a discourse on the being and perfections of God it is incomplete. A text may not specify all the topics of a

sermon; but it ought to comprise them all, as a principle comprises all its applications.

Further, good taste requires that, if possible, a text shall comprise no more material than is discussed in the sermon. The reason for this is its obvious tendency to promote unity of impression. Study of texts for the sake of retrenchment down to the precise limits of the subjects is the mark of an accomplished preacher. A text is for use. Enough is better than more. Dr. South's precision in his selections is often excellent. For instance, he discourses on a subject which he entitles "Christianity mysterious, and the wisdom of God in making it so;" and his text is, "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery." He preaches on the love of Christ for his disciples, and chooses the text, "Henceforth I call you not servants; . . . but I have called you friends." One advantage of deriving subjects from texts, instead of choosing texts for subjects, is that redundancy of text is more easily avoided. But sometimes, often indeed, it can not be avoided. We can not always find a passage which expresses exactly our theme, no more and no less. We must, then, admit redundancy as a less evil than incompleteness. Too much is a less evil than too little.

This suggests that good taste forbids the elimination of superfluous material from within the limits of a text. This error is not that of mutilating a text for the sake of a forced pertinency; nor is it that of elision from the end of a passage, nor that of omission from its beginning: it is elimination from within a text, as superfluous terms are thrown out from an algebraic equation. For example, in the Epistle to the Colossians occurs the passage, "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, hum

bleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering." The late Rev. Mr. Barnes of Philadelphia published a sermon on a benignant spirit, of which the text was, "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, kindness." This expurgation of inconvenient elements from the interior of a passage is not in good taste. Dr. Watts may thus pick up a version of a Psalm by eliminating from the original the fragments which are neither lyrical nor devotional; and on the same principle we may properly eliminate portions of the Scriptures in the public reading of them for devotional purposes. You may form a burial-service with which that used by the Church of England, impressive as it is, can bear no comparison, by weaving together selected fragments of the Scriptures. But the selection of a text for purposes of discussion is a different thing. Here no such skill in *ricochet* is agreeable.

Therefore, when a redundant text is necessary, we should repeat all that is needed to avoid elimination, and then specify the words which are the text. Many passages require this treatment. For example, you wish to discourse on Christian honesty; and you select as your text the eighth verse of the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians, reading the entire passage. Then you soon specify the phrase, "Whatsoever things are honest," as containing the theme of your remarks. In this manner you preserve the connection of inspired language, and do not distort or confuse the ideas of a hearer respecting it. This is good taste, because it is the dictate of reverence.

(3) A third inquiry respecting the relation of a text to the sermon is, May a preacher employ an accommodated text?

What is an accommodated text? A text is not neces-

sarily accommodated when it receives a different application from that which it has in its inspired use. A text may be a biblical fact; that fact may illustrate a principle; that principle may be susceptible of other illustrations; of those illustrations, one which is not expressed or implied in the text may be the theme of discourse. For instance, the evangelist affirms that "Pilate and Herod were made friends together." This illustrates the principle that wicked men who are enemies to each other often agree in their deeper hostility to Christ. This principle is further illustrated in a variety of ways in modern life. Of these ways, one preacher selected the coalition of two hostile parties against the temperance reform as the theme of a discourse on a Fast Day. This was not an accommodated text: it was a remote application, yet a perfectly legitimate one, of the principle illustrated in the original. Dr. Bushnell's sermon on unconscious influence, from the text, "Then went in also that other disciple," was not on an accommodated text.

An accommodated text is one which is applied in a sermon to a subject resembling that of the text, yet *radically* different from that of the text. Examine an illustration. Bishop Huntington has a sermon the subject of which is more properly termed regeneration. He defines it "the economy of renewal." His text is taken from Micah, "Arise ye and depart; for this is not your rest." This passage does not express the doctrine of the sermon; it does not imply that doctrine; it can not by any logical inference be made to reach that doctrine: it is, therefore, no authority for that doctrine. But it does resemble the doctrine; for there is in regeneration an arising and a departing from an old state to a new, and at the command of God.

This text, therefore, may be made to suggest the doctrine of regeneration, by accommodation. It resembles that from which it is radically different.

Accommodated texts may be of three kinds. One kind is where the resemblance between text and theme is only in sound. Thus an Episcopal preacher discoursed on the observance of Ash Wednesday, from the text, "I have eaten ashes like bread." Another preached on the duties of judges, from the text, "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

Another kind of accommodated text is one in which the accommodation is founded on a metaphorical resemblance; and this, again, may be twofold. A literal text may be used metaphorically. A sermon was once preached on the truth that "depravity pervades the moral virtues of man." The text was, "Now, in the place where he was crucified, there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulcher," — a literal, narrative text used figuratively to express a doctrine of religion. A metaphorical text, again, may be used as figurative of a different sense from that of the original. Many sermons have been preached on the text, "Look . . . to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged," from which preachers derive the duty of Christians to remember the depraved state from which they have been redeemed. This passage is figurative in the original; but not at all figurative of any allusion to depravity. It refers to God's dealings with the Hebrew nation: it pictures their origin as a people. The figure in the original is not a pit, but a quarry. The sentiment is, therefore, "remember your national infancy, and the labor bestowed on your national training. You were once a rough, unhewn block: remember that." Yet, by a change in the character of the metaphor, this is made

a text on individual depravity. Professor Longfellow, in one of his works, introduces a preacher, whom he represents as discoursing on autumn from the text, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" This passage is figurative in the original; but the metaphor is referred by commentators diversely either to God or to Christ. It has, at least, no inspired reference to the autumnal foliage: it can be so applied only on the ground of metaphorical resemblance.

Still another kind of accommodation of texts is on the ground of resemblance in principle; that is, the principle in the text resembles the principle of the subject, but is radically distinct from it. The words of the text, therefore, will express the principle of the subject perhaps equally well with that of their true meaning. For example, Dr. South has a sermon on preparation for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, of which the text is, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment?" Here is resemblance between text and theme, not merely in sound, not only by metaphor, but in principle. Yet text and theme are radically distinct. Dr. Blair has a sermon on the importance of time, which he derives, by this kind of accommodation, from the inquiry of Pharaoh addressed to Jacob, "How old art thou?" A preacher in Maine, by the same kind of accommodation, preached upon the principle of subjecting the sale of intoxicating drinks to the Maine law, which he derived from a passage in Esther, "And the drinking was according to the law." These three kinds of accommodation should be remembered; for upon them depends the whole question of the propriety of accommodated texts.

We are now prepared to answer the question, May

a preacher use an accommodated text? The abuses of accommodation have been such, that many of the more manly of the ministry have said, without qualification, "No: let us have none of this puerility." But I think that a little discrimination will show that the question must be answered variously. Do not the following positions commend themselves to a manly taste?

First, accommodation of texts on the ground of resemblance in sound is puerile. A manly culture revolts from it. It degrades the Bible. It places texts on the same level of rhetorical character with puns. Rejecting this kind of accommodation, we should condemn all forced applications of scriptural names of persons and places. It was a frivolity worthy of a pope, that Pius VI. should flatter an Austrian general whose name was John, by preaching a sermon in honor of a victory which the general had gained, choosing for a text, "There was a man sent from God, and his name was John." It was an impertinence of which none but an idle mind would have been guilty, that a preacher, living no matter where, saluted an unruly parishioner whose name was Ephraim, on the Sabbath after his marriage, by choosing for the text of the morning sermon the words, "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." These are specimens of a most unscholarly and unmanly taste, which has made the pulpit notorious. We owe a vast amount of it which still degrades the clergy to the mental idleness of the Romish priesthood. A mind which feels that it has any thing else to do will not, without violence to itself, stoop to this play upon a jew's-harp.

Further: accommodation on the ground of metaphorical resemblance is also to be condemned. Some examples of it may appear plausible; but the principle

involved in it is always the same. Such accommodation is not natural to a well-trained mind when that mind is in earnest. It belongs to a sportive or a fanciful state of mental activity. Least of all is it becoming to the use of a volume so burdened with thought as is the Bible. Some examples of this kind of accommodation are even more objectionable, because more elaborate, than the accommodation by jew's-harp, which we have already condemned. Can you conceive of a more ridiculous combination than the following, from one of the old preachers? He adopted the distinction between clean and unclean beasts under the Levitical law as emblematic of the distinction between Christians and sinners, after this fashion: "The clean beasts divided the hoof; so Christians believe in the Father and the Son: clean beasts were those who chewed the cud; so Christians meditate on the law: sinners do neither of these things, and therefore are unclean beasts."

Even the best specimens of this kind of accommodation are objectionable. For instance, Massillon, whose taste was sadly corrupted by his Romish inheritance in culture, selects the text, "In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, and withered;" a purely literal, historical text, as it stands in the Bible; but Massillon accommodates it, on the ground of metaphorical resemblance, to three distinct classes of religious characters. Under the head of "the blind" he considers those who are deficient in religious knowledge; under the head of "the halt," those who are insincere in confession; and, under the head of "the withered," those who have no sorrow in repentance.

We feel without argument the levity of such uses of the Bible as these; but why are they not, in principle, as worthy of commendation as the following, which

is a specimen of a large class of very plausible conceits which have frittered away much of the dignity of texts? A preacher chose for his text the words, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent;" and he accommodated it to this theme, "the necessity of drawing near to Christ in hours of trouble and darkness." The whole usage of the pulpit by which metaphorical resemblance is tolerated as the ground of accommodation is false in principle, and puerile in taste. As culture advances, taste condemns it; and as piety grows in alliance with culture, the heart revolts from it. There is no Christian good sense in it. It holds the Bible at arm's-length. It is sympathetic with a religion of the fancy rather than with a religion of the reason and the conscience. One is not surprised to find it rife in the Romish pulpit: it is at home there. That superficial religious culture, and that idleness of mind which can amuse itself with subjecting the salvation of a soul to the cut of a surplice, are in perfect affinity with this frivolous method of using the word of God. Yet a considerable part of the literature of the Protestant pulpit is infected with the same abuse; and many Protestant commentators have encouraged it by cultivating the taste for "spiritualizing" the Scriptures.

The accommodation of texts on the ground of resemblance in principle between the text and the theme is admissible. William Jay preached a sermon on a national jubilee appointed in England on the occasion of the king's entering the fiftieth year of his reign. His text was taken from Leviticus, "It shall be a jubilee unto you." President Davies of Virginia preached a discourse on a New-Year's Day, and selected as his text the words of Jeremiah to the false prophet Hananiah, "This year thou shalt die." Dr. Hitchcock of

Amherst has a sermon on the text, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." His subject is, "certain mineralogical illustrations of character." In each of these cases the subject of the text is not the subject of the sermon. The text can not logically be made to cover the sermon; yet there is more than resemblance in sound or figure; there is resemblance in principle. Even this kind of accommodation may be abused; but its right use is defensible on several grounds.

Such accommodation is a natural use of a text. Our minds are so made, that similar principles suggest each other. If, then, the same language may express either, it is not unnatural to a manly train of thought to use that language by transfer from one to the other. Further, it is a scriptural use of a text. Passages from the Old Testament are sometimes quoted in the New Testament, introduced by the phrase ἵνα πληρωθῇ, on no other principle than this of accommodation. The quotation is transferred from its original sense to another, which that sense resembles, but from which it is distinct. Again: it is often a pleasing use of a text. So far from detracting from the value of a text, if not abused, it augments that value, through the interest which the mind feels in the discovery of resemblance. This interest is similar to that which attends the method of teaching by parables. What is a parable? It is a narrative illustrating a truth by means of resemblance. The language has its narrative sense, and yet is applied in a didactic sense on the ground of resemblance of cases. The hypothetical case resembles the real one. The conduct of the ten virgins was not identical with that of men under the conditions of probation, but it was similar. The theft of the ewe lamb was not the

same as the sin of David, but it was like it. Once more: this is often a necessary use of a text. Subjects must be discussed in the pulpit which can not be introduced by a text in any other way, and yet retain the significance of the custom of employing texts. Which is better, — to introduce the duty of sinners to seek eternal life in company with Christians by the text, "He that hath an ear let him hear;" or by the text, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good"? Respecting many themes, we have no range of choice. We must do one of three things, — we must preach without a text, or we must take a general text, which as a text means nothing, or we must select an accommodated text.

For these reasons we accept the usage of accommodating texts on the ground of resemblance in principle, but reject all accommodation on the ground of resemblance in sound or in metaphor. Yet even this restricted usage is liable to abuse. We shall therefore consider in the next lecture certain cautions to be observed in the use of accommodated texts.

LECTURE IX.

THE TEXT: ACCOMMODATION, MOTTOES, MISCELLANIES.

It has been observed, that, in the use of accommodated texts, certain cautions are necessary. Of these, the first is that we should not select accommodated texts when logical texts can be found. Why do we need an indirect authority for a theme when a direct one is at command? Why should we be content with a hint of a subject when an expression of it is practicable? We sport with a truth which we seek to introduce by needless circumlocution. Earnest processes of mind are always as direct as they can be without hazard to their object. The pulpit suffers in its reputation for manliness, and it deserves to suffer, if it is tempted into dalliance with truth for the gratification of a fancy for a text. Why should we discourse upon the parental love of God from the narrative of Jacob's affection for Joseph, or of Abraham's for Isaac, when we have a text which seems as if inspired for our purpose: "If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Why should we choose as the text of a sermon on the absoluteness of human obligation to God the words, "How much owest thou unto my lord?" when we have such a text as this by the side of it, "When ye shall have

done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do"? If we gain nothing by an accommodated text, we may be assured that we lose something. Intrinsically, the logical text is the superior.

From this it follows that we should not generally choose accommodated texts. This is one form of abuse of this usage of the pulpit, — that preachers are servants to their fancy in the selection of texts, and therefore they preach disproportionately upon those which are not, logically, sources of their themes. It is no defense of such disproportion to say that the themes have no logical texts, and therefore the accommodation is a necessity. It is so much the worse for the themes then. That is a distorted ministry which deals in any large proportion with subjects which are not logically presented in the Scriptures. It is not a biblical ministry.

A regard for biblical authority requires, moreover, that we should not accommodate passages in such a way as to distort or degrade their biblical associations. This may be done, even when a remote resemblance in principle exists between text and theme. Bishop Latimer once preached a discourse on the text, "Who art thou?" The interrogation was originally addressed by the Pharisees to our Saviour. But Latimer employs it as a monitory inquiry addressed by the Holy Spirit to sinners. He asks, "Who art thou?" and answers, "A lost sinner;" and, again, "Who art thou?" and replies, "A redeemed sinner." The sermon is a series of such repetitions of the query, with admonitory responses. This is accommodation on the ground of some distant resemblance of text to theme in point of meaning; but

it is fanciful, because it distorts the associations of the text. Distortion of the biblical associations of texts sometimes takes the form of transposing classes of hearers to whom texts are supposed to be addressed; that is, addressing to Christians language which originally is addressed to sinners, and *vice versa*. Such transposition is not always a distortion of a text. Sometimes the truth declared is naturally applicable to both classes, though addressed to one; but in other cases a text has become localized in the midst of certain surroundings in a hearer's mind, so that no preacher of good taste would disturb those associations. On this ground we must condemn the choice of a clergyman who once preached on the text, "One thing thou lackest," and accommodated it to a discourse on the deficiencies of Christians. Are we not sensible of a violence done to the biblical associations of a text in this case?

Yet sometimes the danger is not only this, but of an absolute destruction of a text in its biblical significance. I remark, therefore, that we should not accommodate passages, which, by frequent accommodation, are in danger of losing their true meaning in the minds of hearers. The necessity of this caution will be evident from an illustration. The text, "Watchman, what of the night?" is one of the standards of the pulpit; but who of the people knows its legitimate meaning? The pulpit has appropriated it almost universally to sermons on the "signs of the times." If a preacher wishes to discourse upon the prospects of missions, or the prospects of reform, or the prospects of the nation, he turns to this as the most convenient passage in the Bible, because it seems to restrict discussion to nothing in particular. But in fact it is one

of the most individual and restricted of all texts. In its biblical significance it is a taunt of infidelity. The prophet is represented as stationed in a watch-tower, in a time of great peril, on the lookout for friend or foe. The triumphant Idumæan is then represented as passing along, and crying out in derision of the solitary sentinel. The elocution of the passage ought to express this derision. It is as if the Idumæan stranger spoke thus, "Ha, ha, watchman! how do you like the look of the night?" A sermon on this text, designed to develop the taunting spirit of infidelity in a time of misfortune to the cause of Christ, might disclose the significance of the language with great force. But the passage is scarcely known to the people in any such use of it. Such a discourse upon it would be a novelty. Preachers generally have used the text as it is used in the missionary hymn founded upon it by Bowring: —

> "Watchman, tell us of the night,
> What its signs of promise are."

That hymn and the usage of the pulpit have almost destroyed that text in the minds of the people. Such texts as this ought not to be accommodated by the present generation of preachers. They have been wrenched out of place in the popular thought of them. They are almost lifeless. They should be permitted to rest from accommodated uses till they have recovered their biblical force.

(4) Similar to this inquiry concerning accommodated texts, yet distinct from it, is a fourth inquiry affecting the relation of the text to the sermon. It is, May preachers properly employ motto-texts?

What is a motto-text? It is not necessarily an accommodated text. The subject may be a logical

deduction from a motto-text: it can not be such from an accommodated text. For example, "The field is the world" may be a motto-text for a sermon on the conversion of Madagascar to Christianity, but it can not be accommodated to that subject. The subject is logically related to the text. Again: a text to which no expressed reference is made in the discussion is not necessarily a motto-text. "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" may be the text of a sermon in which the text is not once repeated, or expressly referred to, throughout the entire discussion; yet it may not be a motto.

A motto implies two things, — remoteness of connection between the text and the theme, and independence of the text in the discussion of the theme. Observe one or two illustrations. Upon the text, "That the soul be without knowledge it is not good," Professor Park once preached a sermon on the value of theological seminaries. In this case, the text contained a principle. From that principle the theme was a remote inference. No further use was made of the text than to introduce that inference. From the text, "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good," the late Professor Edwards once preached a discourse on the state of the Roman Catholic religion in Italy. On the following Sabbath, in the same pulpit, a sermon from the same text was preached on education societies. In these instances, the text was a command to which the sermons were acts of obedience; yet no mention was made of the text after the subjects were announced. These were not accommodated texts. Why? Because the connection was logical between text and theme. Yet they were not suggestive texts as related to the themes. Why? Because the connec-

tion between theme and text was remote. Neither were they suggestive of the discussion, nor the discussion of them. Why? Because the discussion proceeded independently of the text.

Yet, again, a text may be both a motto and an accommodated text. Some years ago, on the occasion of a famine in Ireland, a charity-sermon was preached in Boston from the text, "I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction." This was an accommodated text: the subject of the original does not contain at all the subject of the sermon. The text was applied to the sermon only on the ground of resemblance in thought. But it was also a motto-text: no use could be made of it in the discussion of the theme. It represents an extreme class, yet not a small one, of instances in which the liberty of the pulpit takes the broadest range.

It is very popular to condemn the use of motto-texts, and for reasons which are not without force. It is urged that it is trifling with the Scriptures to choose a text, and then abandon it: the text is said to be, in such a case, only a pretext: therefore it is said to be unfavorable to evangelical preaching to employ motto-texts. We often hear objection made to them as facilitating literature or philosophy at the expense of the gospel. These are valid objections to the use of mottoes in preaching, but they are not conclusive. A decisive argument can be advanced in defense of such texts. Of this, one consideration is that the exclusion of mottoes would restrict injuriously the range of the topics of the pulpit. Such texts are a necessity to any broad compass of thought in preaching. Combinations of truth are suggested by the wants of a modern congregation which no text of the Bible will express, and which none will inclose otherwise than by remote rela-

tion. Occidental civilization renders some discussions needful which were not needed in patriarchal or apostolic times, and for which, therefore, the Scriptures contain no forcible texts. Modern methods of usefulness are affected by modern inventions. The invention of printing has created tract societies, for instance. Are not they a suitable theme for a sermon? Yet where is the text which names or implies this department of religious action otherwise than by remote suggestion?

Modern theological discussions render necessary some combinations of truth in preaching which were not needed at Ephesus or at Rome in the ministrations of St. Paul. We can find no texts for them other than mottoes. The local history of a parish may create an occasional need of certain methods of discourse, which no inspired thought embraces otherwise than by a general principle, that reaches the exact case of that parish, two thousand years later, only by remote connection. Shall these modern, occidental, local, in every way peculiar needs of a congregation be neglected for the want of texts by which a preacher can meet those needs textually? So far from promoting the evangelical spirit of the pulpit, such a principle would restrain and cripple that spirit. As a book of texts, the Bible is made for the pulpit, not the pulpit for the Bible. We must have freedom, or we can not have life, in the adaptation of texts to subjects.

Another consideration in the defense of motto-texts is that they are a less evil than a forced intimacy between text and sermon would be. An artifice to which some preachers resort to avoid the appearance of having a motto-text is to foist the text into the sermon by repeating it at every convenient landing-place. Another

artifice of this kind is to dwell upon the text by pointing out forced resemblances between it and the train of thought in the sermon. One need scarcely say that these artifices are unmanly. We see them to be so when they are stated in form. They are among the tricks of composition to which no manly mind will stoop consciously. But, as with some of the more venial faults of composition, we fall into them unconsciously. We need, therefore, to define such artifices as these to our own criticism, and see that they are in bad taste, that they are worse logic, and that, most of all, they are miserable exegesis. Admitting that a motto-text is an evil, it is a less evil than an unnatural connection of text and theme.

A third consideration in defense of motto-texts is that they are a less evil than accommodated texts. It is a singular fact that the very taste which declaims against the irreverence of using mottoes in the pulpit is especially fond of the accommodation of the Scriptures to uninspired trains of thought. The most unnatural conceits of the pulpit have been attempts to spiritualize passages which had no religious thought in them. But which is the worse, — to choose a text which logically contains the theme, and then discuss the theme independently of the text, or to choose a text which contains neither discussion nor theme, except as the preacher puts them there? Which is the more irreverent, — to neglect a text, or to force into it uninspired contents? The truth is, that, under proper restrictions, neither is an act of irreverence. But, of the two, the use of the motto is the more vigorous expedient. It is less liable to abuse; it has created less abuse of the usages of the pulpit than have the conceits of accommodation. Yet the clerical taste

which has rioted in these has been offended at the motto.

But if mottoes, in this view of them, seem to be a necessity, they suggest the question, Is it invariably necessary to have a text? This leads me to remark a fourth consideration in vindication of motto-texts, that they are a less evil than to preach, even occasionally, without a text. It seems plausible to ask, If a text is not needed in a discussion, why have a text for the theme? But the objection will not stand the test of practice. A custom like this of building the pulpit upon divine foundations will not bear tampering with. An invasion of it occasionally invites a longer suspension of it, and a suspension tempts to an abandonment. The custom as it stands gives a valuable advantage to evangelical preachers. It is a silent but powerful check upon a heretical pulpit, that usage requires its ministrations to be founded on inspired texts: it is compelled to use a volume which is its own refutation. This is too great an advantage to the truth to be lightly thrown away. Let an evangelical ministry allow occasional departures from the usage, and we may rest assured that preachers of error will very speedily widen the breach. They will often preach without texts; they will choose texts from uninspired sources; eventually they will abandon the custom, as Voltaire advised.

The liberty we claim, however, is obviously liable to abuses. We should, therefore, observe certain restrictions in the use of motto-texts. Of these, one is that mottoes should not be needlessly chosen. If passages can be found which are exactly fitted to the demands of a discussion, they should always have the preference. Another restriction is that mottoes should not be gen-

erally chosen as texts. Here, as in the case of accommodated texts, it proves a fault in a preacher's range of themes and methods of discussion, if his texts are in large proportion mere mottoes of his sermons. The proportion is, probably, the exact proportion in which his trains of thought are but distantly related to the Scriptures. A third restriction is that we should, if possible, refrain from employing as mottoes texts which are seldom employed in any other way. Some passages have been standard mottoes for ages. "The field is the world" has been the motto of missionary sermons innumerable. Who ever heard a sermon on it which was designed to unfold the principle of the text? "Glory to God in the highest" has been persecuted with sermons upon a vast variety of subjects. So has the text, "Faith cometh by hearing." A merciful preacher will be merciful to such texts. It relieves very much of the evil incident to a motto, if it be an unhackneyed passage.

This suggests a fourth restriction, that, in the choice of a motto-text, we should have special care for the pertinence of it to the sermon. An interesting coincidence of text and theme, though it be but momentary, will, by the pleasure it gives, balance the evil of seeming to neglect the text in the discussion. It indicates care on a preacher's part: it shows that he has chosen the motto thoughtfully; he has not chosen it simply out of deference to custom. Let us illustrate the point of this restriction by the contrast of two examples. A Sabbath-school missionary preached a discourse in Richmond, some years ago, on the text, "The field is the world." The object of the sermon was to give some information respecting the establishment of Sabbath schools in Minnesota. The result was the request

for the sum of twenty-five dollars for a Sabbath-school library. Of course, the text was necessarily a motto; yet it had a perfectly logical connection with the subject. "The world" includes Minnesota: the cultivation of "the field" includes Sabbath schools. But was it a becoming text? Was it an interesting text? Did it add any thing to the force of the sermon? Did it suggest any pleasing answer to the question, Why did the preacher have a text? Did it not leave bare the fact that he chose a text out of deference to usage, and for no other purpose?

In the same pulpit, at about the same time, a clergyman preached in behalf of the Waldenses. His object was to give the most recent intelligence concerning the state of that people, and to ask a contribution to the supply of their wants. He must, of course, select a motto-text. He had recently visited the Waldenses, and had been requested by them to present their good wishes to the American churches. He accordingly availed himself of this coincidence between his own experience and that of St. Paul, and selected for his text the words from the thirteenth chapter of Hebrews, "They of Italy salute you." This was both a motto and an accommodated text. It had no logical connection with the subject: it had no place whatever in the discussion. One can not conceive of a wider latitude between text and theme. The case represents the very extreme of usage respecting texts. Still who will say that it was not a good text? Did it not furnish a satisfactory answer to the question, Why did the preacher choose a text?

A fifth restriction upon the use of motto-texts is that we should not choose them if we do not mean to treat them in a manly way. We may better abandon them

than attempt to disguise them. We need not inform an audience that our text is not the best conceivable. The less we say of the processes of composition in the delivery of a discourse, the better; but we should manfully leave these processes to disclose themselves, if hearers have the skill to observe them. So we should leave a motto-text to speak for itself, without any effort to conceal the fact that it is a motto. If we do not need the text in the body of the sermon, we should let it alone. We should not thrust it into the interstices of the structure, as if to remind the audience, in the absence of better evidence, that we had a text.

5th, We have now considered the most important inquiries relating to the selection of texts. There remain a few topics, not of vital importance, and yet not matters of indifference, which may be considered, in the fifth place, under the title of "miscellaneous inquiries."

(1) Of these, the first is, Where should be the place of the text in the delivery of the sermon? The American and the German usages, as you are aware, differ. American usage is almost uniform in placing the text at the beginning of the discourse. The German usage is not uniform; but, more frequently than otherwise, it locates the text at the end of an introduction.

The German method has some advantages. It prepares a hearer's mind for the text. Some texts may need such a preparative process. A text may contain a repulsive doctrine. A preacher may have reason to prefer the conciliatory to the authoritative process in discoursing upon that doctrine: therefore he may deem it prudent to introduce the text with prefatory remarks. A text may contain an offensive simile: a preface not

apologetic, but commendatory, may rescue it from criticism. A text may excite undue expectations in an audience. It is sometimes expedient to forestall excessive expectations by remarks introducing such a text. Again: the German usage assimilates preaching to secular oratory. In itself it is a disadvantage to isolate the pulpit. As it is against nature to make monks of clergymen, so it is not in itself desirable to separate preaching from other methods of public, oral address.

Further: the German method is less formal than ours, and therefore is better adapted to appeals to the feelings of hearers. In this respect it is well fitted to the character of the German pulpit, which is more imaginative and emotional, and less argumentative and instructive, than ours. German preachers state and define truth less severely than American preachers; they argue less; they illustrate and appeal more. Moreover, the German method of locating texts, if not uniformly adopted, promotes variety in preaching. Any thing is valuable which prevents any usage of the pulpit from crystallizing. We may, therefore, with good effect, occasionally adopt the German form.

But the American usage should predominate in our practice, and this for several reasons. One is that it *is* the usage of our pulpit. Another reason is that the American usage gives greater prominence to the Scriptures than the German. Something is gained by beginning discourse with inspired words. The text of a sermon is like the title of a book. The place of honor, wherever that is, is the ordinary place for the text. This suggests, further, that it is accordant with the religious feelings of a preacher commonly to place scriptural language before his own. It is natural that we should follow, rather than seem to lead, inspired

thought. Again: the American method promotes brevity of preliminaries. The danger attends the German mode, of having a double introduction, — one for the text, and one for the subject. This is often the fact in German preaching. In earnest discussion, and especially in difficult discussion, such as is often heard in the American pulpit, economy of time in the delivery of preliminary matter is a necessity. The American custom, therefore, should predominate in the habits of an American preacher; but an occasional deviation from it is no eccentricity, and may be an excellence.

(2) A second miscellaneous inquiry is, Should a text be repeated in the announcement? This is not always necessary: the text may be short. It is not always convenient: the text may be long. No rule can be adopted. Sometimes emphasis may require repetition; again, elegance may forbid it. Why should we seek uniformity in a matter of this kind? Variety is better.

(3) Another inquiry is, What should be the order of announcement of a text? Always announce chapter and verse first; and this simply because it is natural. When we quote an authority, it is natural to give the authority before we cite the words. A text is an authority quoted. To cite the language first, and then give the reference, is always abrupt, sometimes affected, and occasionally ludicrous.

(4) Another inquiry is, With what kind of preface should a text be announced? Have no rule, except to cultivate simplicity and variety. It is a gross violation of simplicity to announce a text with a pompous or long-winded preface. I do not refer now to introductions of texts where the German usage is adopted, but to the prefatory words which almost all preachers use

to avoid abruptness. These are sometimes offensively elaborate. Have you never heard prefaces of texts of which this is a caricature? "You will find the particular passage of the Sacred Scriptures to which it is my present purpose to invite your earnest attention on this solemn occasion, in that most interesting and impressive description of the most blessed of the virtues, recorded in the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, in the thirteenth chapter, the first verse, the last clause of the verse, and expressed in the following language; to wit, 'I am become as sounding brass.'"

I close these remarks on the subject of texts, with a statement of the general principle upon which all questions respecting them should be determined. It is that a keen sense of the reverence due to the Scriptures should be associated with a liberal construction of rules. That is the best text for a sermon which associates it in the most manly, free, and intimate connection with the Word of God.

LECTURE X.

THE EXPLANATION: DEFINITION, OBJECTS, MATERIALS

HAVING finished the discussion of the text of a sermon, we proceed now to that feature of discourse which has been entitled the explanation.

I. What is the explanation? It is that part of a sermon which comprehends all those remarks of which the object is to adjust the meaning of the text to the homiletic use which is to be made of it.

1st, Observe that it is not entirely identical with the process by which we have characterized an explanatory sermon All that is needful to constitute a sermon of that class is that the main process of it be explanatory of something. But the explanation as a part of a topical sermon concerns exclusively the text and its contemplated uses. It may not be the chief feature of a discourse: it may be the briefest incident to the chief discussion.

2d, Further: the explanation as executed should be distinguished from the process of investigation. This is self-evident when stated, but the statement is essential. Explanation, it should always be remembered, is an after-process to that of discovery: it concerns the results of investigation, not the process. The expounder ceases, for the time, to be an investigator. The speaker is no longer a recluse. Some essentials

of good preaching grow out of this truism, and yet are often sacrificed by forgetting it.

3d, Moreover, the explanation in a sermon is often distinct from exegesis in a commentary. These may be synonymous, but they are not necessarily so. Exegesis concerns a text, with no reference to its homiletic uses: the explanation concerns a text, with no other reference than to its homiletic uses. It explains the text, therefore, only so far, and with such incidents of illustration, as the object of the sermon requires. Its aim is to make the text useful. Beyond this, the sermon finds no place for a text, and therefore no place for its explanation. Exegesis, then, is no more a model for homiletic explanations than the homiletic explanation is for exegesis in a commentary. The two things differ as their uses differ.

4th, Moreover, the explanation, as a part of a topical or a textual sermon, is distinct from exposition in an expository sermon. The distinction is, that the one is only a preliminary, while the other is the bulk of the sermon. Rhetorically this distinction is not radical. The rhetorical process in the two specimens of composition is the same. The principles which we are about to consider, therefore, have a double importance. They are suggested by the explanation as a fragment of a topical sermon; but they cover, as well, the whole subject of expository preaching. What the explanation in a topical sermon is, that the body of an expository sermon is, with this difference only, that one is preliminary, and the other not. We discuss the explanation, then, not merely as one part in the analysis of a sermon, but also as a rhetorical specimen of expository discourse. I prefer, for the sake of rhetorical unity, to discuss the subject of expository preaching in this connection, rather than to treat it as a distinct theme.

II. We pass, in the second place, to consider more specifically the objects of the explanation.

1st, Of these, may be named, first, verbal criticism Certain texts require this, and nothing more.

Verbal criticism may take the form of an analysis of the text. A text sometimes needs to be partitioned in order to be appreciated. Significant words need to be distinguished; points of emphasis need to be made obvious; an ellipsis may need to be amplified; a person implied may need to be expressed. An illustration of some of these objects is found in a discourse published by the late Rev. Dr. Tyler of East Windsor. On the text, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," the preacher proceeds in his explanation to inquire: 1. Who utters this language? 2. What is the offer made in this language? 3. On what condition is the offer made? Having thus developed the forcible points in the text, he deduces the proposition that nothing hinders the salvation of any man but his own will. The explanation here consists of verbal criticism in the form of an analysis of the text. Again: verbal criticism may be necessary in the form of definition. This will sometimes be the object. Mr. Robertson, in a sermon on the text, "For their sakes I sanctify myself," devotes nearly the whole of his explanation to a definition of the word "sanctify" as applied to the Son of God. His whole sermon hinges on that definition. Again: verbal criticism may be necessary in the form of verbal paraphrase. This is only a succession of definitions. It is often necessary as a translation from the antique dialect of the Scriptures into the language of modern life. Verbal criticism, again, may be necessary in the form of correction of the text. If the English version be wrong, the aim of the sermon may require

that it be righted. If the English version be obscure, the design of the sermon may require that it be made clear.

2d, A second object of an explanation may be logical adjustment.

The logical relations of the text to the context may need to be adjusted. A text intelligible in itself may seem to contradict the context. It may seem to be irrelevant to the context. It may be parenthetical. Its truth — if not its truth, its force; if not its force, its pertinence — may depend on certain logical connections with the context, which are not obvious. To make them obvious may be all the exposition which the text demands. The logical relations of the text to other portions of the Scriptures than the context may require adjustment. Some passages instantly suggest apparently contradictory passages. An explanation achieves much for a sermon, if it makes distant Scriptures buttress a text. The relations of a text to arguments confirmatory of its interpretation may require adjustment. Much to the purpose is often accomplished by showing briefly that a metaphorical text resembles a similar metaphor in modern *usus loquendi*. The protection of a text from a distorted literalism may depend on matching it well with homely examples of common speech. The relations of a text to certain intuitions of man may need adjustment. One of the first duties of a preacher is to keep inspired language in line with the necessary beliefs of men. Isolated as texts are from their inspired connections, they often seem to contradict our intuitions, when, if located in their places, they do not so contradict them. No wise preacher will drag a text through a sermon with the semblance or the suspicion of contradiction to intuitions. On the

other hand, it is often a grand support to a text to shape its explanation so as to suggest its clear coincidence with an intuition.

3d, A third object of an explanation may be rhetorical amplification. Oftener than otherwise, this is the chief object. A text which needs no verbal criticism and no logical adjustment may need to be amplified. The Bible is a book of suggestions mainly. Texts, especially, are but hints. An explanation should often expand them; sometimes it should magnify them. It should do the work of the telescope, in bringing a distant truth near, and of the microscope, in disclosing the beauty of a minute truth. Rhetorical amplification may assume either or both of two forms. It may be illustrative paraphrase. This differs from verbal paraphrase only in being constructed for illustration instead of interpretation of a text. The aim is to give not merely a new version, but an illumination of the text. The other form of rhetorical amplification is that of descriptive incident. This adds to paraphrase of a text its surroundings in the inspired narrative. The object is the same as before, — to educe the full force of the text.

A careful study of the demands of a text in respect to these several objects of explanations will save a preacher from needless and aimless expositions. The inquiry should be, Does the text, for the use to which I am to put it in this sermon, demand either of these objects? Does, or does not, the full force of the text, for my use of it, lie on the face of it? If it does, then no explanation is required. If given, it will be only an encumbrance, as many long-winded, expository introductions are.

III. From these objects of the explanation, we pro-

ceed, in the third place, to consider the materials of explanations. Bearing in mind the relation of the subject to expository preaching, this inquiry assumes more importance than if it were limited to a fragment of discourse. The chief design in discussing it is to answer it homiletically, by showing how this part of a discourse, and how expository sermons in full, may be adjusted to popular presentation. The laws of exegesis, of course, underlie the whole question. Homiletics has somewhat to say, however, of a preacher's use of those laws in the pulpit.

1st, Of the sources of expository materials, then, should be named first, and, of course, primarily in point of importance, the words of the text. This is obvious.

2d, Equally obvious is a second source; namely, the immediate context. Popular interest in a text will often depend on a skillful use of the context. Sometimes an elaborate use of the context is necessary to disclose any homiletic force in the text itself. The text of a certain discourse is found in Judges xvii. 13: "Now know I that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest." What homiletic use does such a text suggest? What hearer, in listening to it, sees in it any thing to quicken interest beyond the momentary wonder that a preacher should found a sermon upon it? But Rev. Dr. Bushnell, by an ingenious yet not forced manipulation of the context, shows that the text is a unique example — perhaps the most pithy one in the Scriptures — of the natural fraternity between wickedness and superstition. Half the vivacity of expository preaching depends on a skillful evolution of texts from their biblical surroundings.

3d, This suggests a third source of the materials of explanations; namely, the scope of the whole argument

from which a text is taken. Not merely the text, not merely the immediate context, but the drift of an epistle is often essential to a truthful interpretation of a word. A precept, a doctrine, an ordinance depends, it may be, not on a text, nor on its proximate paragraphs, but on the aim of a volume. The root shows what the branch must be. The interpretation of the entire Book of Revelation hinges on the assumed aim of the book at the outset. This principle is as valuable to a preacher as to an exegete. The great theme of anathema in the Epistle to the Romans is not moralism, but ritualism. The scope of the epistle discloses this, and it sharpens the point of a hundred texts against a totally different sin from that which many sermons on those texts assail. Luther and his associates were more biblical in their use of this epistle than many modern divines. They made it teach not only the doctrine of justification by faith, but this doctrine as opposed, not to moralism chiefly, but to reliance for salvation on religious ceremonies. Their sermons on the epistle are just in the line of the Apostle's aim.

4th, A fourth source of the materials of explanations is found in the historical and biographical literature of texts. Facts respecting the character of the writer of a text, events in his history, the place from which he wrote, the time at which he wrote, the immediate occasion of his writing, the place held by him in the biblical canon, the literary qualities of his productions, the character of the persons he addressed, events in their history, the effect of his message upon them, the peculiarities of the age, nation, sect, family, to which they belonged, the eminent contemporaries of both writer and readers, — these and similar materials you recognize as being often the expository setting in

which texts are presented by the pulpit. Every thing vitalizes a text, which, in a natural way, introduces persons into and around it. A group of characters will impress a text on the popular mind, as an illustrated newspaper teaches the people a campaign or a pageant when no grammatical explanation could get a hearing. The biblical writers and characters may sometimes be delivered from the mist in which the fact of their inspiration envelops them in many minds by mentioning some of their secular contemporaries. Can you not imagine some of your more intelligent hearers deriving a gleam of fresh interest in an explanation of a text from the life of Elijah from a notice of the fact that he was contemporaneous with Homer? Or of a text from the writings of St. Paul, from the fact that he was contemporaneous with Seneca?

In the eighth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians St. Paul discusses the point of casuistry respecting the eating of meats offered to idols. What is a merely verbal exegesis of that chapter worth to a popular audience? It is extremely difficult to make such an audience feel that the question there raised by the Apostle had any religious significance. In the handling of that passage the people need to know some of the historic facts of Pagan worship. They need to get a glimpse of the old Greek and Roman private life. They should see that the question of which St. Paul treats was a very practical one to a Roman Christian every time he went into the market to supply his table They should be told that the question concerned the common social courtesies of Roman life. Not only was it true that meats from the temples were sold in the markets, but Roman banquets were often sacrifices to the gods. Invitations to dine with a friend were

often expressed in language technical to religious worship. Hortensius invites Cicero to a sacrifice to Jupiter: he means that Hortensius desires the pleasure of Cicero's company at dinner. The ritualistic character of private banquets remained in form long after the faith of the cultivated classes in Paganism had collapsed. That which was true in this respect at Rome was equally true at Corinth. The Apostle's casuistry, therefore, entered into the conventional courtesies of life in Corinth and throughout the then civilized world. The question in its principle was world-wide, and perpetual in its bearings. Christian life to-day in Paris and New York needs the discussion of it as much as in Rome and Corinth in St. Paul's time. It is a great thing to establish in the popular convictions this pertinence of the Scriptures to modern wants; and very largely this must be done by the apt use of the historical and biographical literature of texts.

5th, A fifth source of the materials of exposition is found in the comparison of texts with parallel passages of the Scriptures.

(1) One obvious use of this expedient is to define the limits of an interpretation. Many texts are truths in their extremes. Some are metaphors. Some are the boldest of hyperboles. Some, on the face of them, are paradoxes; literally interpreted, they are absurd. Some, in the history of Christian doctrine, have become enslaved to philosophy. Some are loaded with inherited misrepresentations. Some are disputed by balanced authorities. It is a great art to handle these texts wisely before an unlettered audience. The common mind is childlike in its tendency to literalism and its attachment to inherited beliefs. That is a masterly aim from the pulpit which can always evolve the truth to

popular satisfaction without awakening the suspicion that the Bible is explained away.

One of the most effective methods of doing this is to make Scripture interpret Scripture. Explain a metaphor by a literal passage. Offset one extreme by its opposite in biblical speech. Interpret an hyperbole by yoking it with a biblical definition. Read the poetry of the Scriptures by the help of its prose. An abused text disabuse by association with one which speaks for both. A disputed text expound by parallels which are not disputed. The proper limits of interpretation are thus often defined most quickly, and, for the popular satisfaction, most conclusively. It assists the common mind to understand the Third Commandment, — "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children," — if we set over against it the declaration in Ezekiel, "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father." If the text, "God is love," is abused by a humanitarian laxity, we tone up the truth most readily by the contrasted text, "God is a consuming fire." Many texts which are abused by fatalistic interpretations we redeem most securely by alliance of them with such passages as, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The general drift of parallel passages is the best defense we have against a false interpretation of one or two isolated texts which merely grammatical exegesis can not save from fatalistic teachings, because, grammatically expounded, they do teach fatalism more naturally than any thing else. "No man can come to me except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him," is a text of this kind. If any language interpreted by grammatical exegesis alone can teach fatalism in the matter of salvation, that text teaches it. We save it only by limiting

it by the general drift of the Scriptures as indicated by parallel passages.

(2) Another use of this expedient in expositions is to explain peculiarities of idiom. The New Testament contains Hebraisms. These are often best explained by parallels from the Old Testament. The dialect of prophecy has idioms peculiar to no other type of revelation. The so-called double sense of prophecy is of this character. The use of the word "day" in prophetic idiom is a peculiarity. We gain much, if, by parallel citations, we make it clear that such idioms exist. The interpretation of an idiom comes to light of itself, if we can collect examples of it in groups.

(3) Again: parallels are valuable in explanations, for purposes of illustration. An obscure text may often be best explained by comparison with a plain one teaching the same sentiment. A text declarative of a principle may be explained by a biblical narrative illustrating the principle. Our whole sacrificial theory of the Atonement, so far as it depends on biblical proof, hinges finally on parallels between the apostolic declarations of it and the Mosaic illustrations of it. What those declarations mean depends on what the Mosaic ritual was.

(4) Further: parallels are valuable in explanations as confirmatory arguments. The exposition is precisely the place in which to strengthen an interpretation by reduplication of it from other texts. It was a favorite method with Rev. Albert Barnes to buttress his texts by citations of similar Scriptures. I once heard him preach a sermon of which seven-eighths consisted of biblical passages illustrating and confirming different phases of his text. This expedient is liable to great abuse; but, skillfully employed, it is sometimes all the explanation that a text requires.

6th, A sixth source of the materials of exposition is the application of the philosophy of common sense to exegesis. The intelligibility of language grows out of the roots of philosophy which are in every mind. We bring to the Bible, antecedently to our interpretation of it, the germs of philosophy by which we understand it, if at all. We can not help this. A preacher should understand and appreciate it, if he would commend the Bible to the common mind. The Bible, rightly interpreted, has an almost omnipotent ally in the common sense of common people: falsely interpreted, it has as potent a foe there. This principle is liable to abuse; but, like other abused truths, it must be used to save it from abuse.

(1) In application, and in illustration of the principle, the fact deserves notice that progress in mental science reacts upon the interpretation of the Scriptures. The effect of improvements in mental science upon dogmatic theology is well understood. The creeds of the Church establish it beyond question. The same principle is not always so fully recognized in the relation of mental science to the history of exegesis. It is a truth of great moment to the pulpit, that exegesis has a history which has been open all along the line to the influences of philosophy. Those influences have been less direct upon the history of exegesis than upon the history of creeds, but not a whit less powerful.

For instance, we do not interpret the Scriptures precisely as men did when the dominant schools of philosophy were all tinged with fatalism. We can not, if we would, interpret certain texts as Augustine, or even as Calvin did, without sacrificing much which mental science has established since their day respecting the freedom of the will. The common mind, as well as the

more highly cultivated, will not, if left to itself, interpret the Scriptures now precisely as it did when its own consciousness was overshadowed and repressed by a fatalistic philosophy on the part of its religious teachers. Mind is so related to language, that philology inevitably responds to philosophy. The two periodically salute each other on the march of the ages. We can not interpret certain Scriptures as Turretin did, any more than we can interpret certain other Scriptures as the popes did, who made them teach the Ptolemaic system of astronomy. The freedom of the will has conquered a place in all civilized philosophy; certain doctrines of theology have shaped themselves by the side of it; and these have been stereotyped by certain improved exegeses. This inter-relationship has been entirely legitimate. Truth has responded to truth. Discovery in the one direction has necessitated discovery in the other. True, the principle here involved has been abused. It is a perilous principle because it is so effective. The blade is dangerous because it has so keen an edge. But, with the guards which every vital principle needs when in the possession of a finite and a depraved mind, it is a necessary principle in the interpretation of a book which counts its age by thousands of years, and yet claims to be a revelation of the mind of God.

(2) Further: progress in political science affects our use of the philosophy of common sense in the interpretation of the Scriptures. Our whole modern theory respecting responsibility to the State for religious belief depends on an abandonment of many venerated interpretations of texts. Those interpretations have yielded to common sense. They have not surrendered to grammar and lexicon · for, under grammar and lexicon alone,

they are possible still. They have yielded to pressure from without. Common sense quickened by political progress has discovered that those interpretations were false. The Bible does not teach them, and never did.

Do we not, for example, necessarily interpret to-day the language of our Lord, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in," differently from the manner in which those Fathers interpreted it who drew from it most prayerfully, not only their authority, but their duty, to establish the Inquisition? Yet we owe our deliverance from thraldom under that text largely to the Prince of Orange. Do we not inevitably interpret the text, "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft," differently from the manner in which the churchmen of Milton's time interpreted it, when they understood from it that republicanism was blasphemy? De Quincey says that this was once "a jewel of a text; for broomsticks were proved out of it most clearly, and also the atrocity of republican government." Look into Algernon Sidney, or into Locke's controversy with Sir Robert Filmer, or into any books of those days on political principles, and you will find that the Scriptures were so used as to form an absolute bar against human progress. What has wrought the change to modern methods of interpretation? In part, it is the two centuries of progress in the philosophy of civil government, which has reacted upon the Scriptures through the state of mind which men bring with them to the work of interpretation.

The same phenomenon is seen in the history of the biblical argument on slavery. Slavery was unanswerably vindicated from the Bible, so long as we allowed its advocates to bring to the exegesis of the book that philosophy of civil government which had been domi-

nant for a thousand years. It is not yet a hundred and forty years since John Newton, after his conversion, took command of a slave-ship, and held it for four years, praying over his Bible all the while, and verily believing that he had tender communion with God, "especially," as he says with charming stupidity, "on my African voyages." What is it that renders such an anomaly impossible now? It is mainly an intuition brought by the popular mind to the interpretation of the Scriptures. "If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong." Men have discovered the true interpretation of the Bible by the lightning of that intuition to which President Lincoln gave utterance. Yet the power to feel it, and the courage to trust it in its fullness, have been the product, mainly, of the last two hundred years.

These illustrations indicate the broad and varied reach of the principle before us, — that the philosophy of common sense is progressive, and that its progress reacts legitimately upon the discovery of the meaning of the Scriptures. The principle, be it repeated, is a perilous one; but, because it is so, we should recognize it in its uses, to save it from its abuses. We can not bury it by disuse. It is no scholastic monopoly. The popular mind will use it lawlessly, if the pulpit does not teach the people its legitimate use. It is one of those forms of popular conviction which we can not control, unless we accept it cordially. If we force upon the Scriptures interpretations which ignore common sense the popular mind will either create for itself wiser biblical teachers, or will reject the Bible as an authoritative revelation.

LECTURE XI.

THE EXPLANATION: MATERIALS, QUALITIES.

7TH, Proceeding with the discussion of the materials of exposition, we find a seventh source of them in the facts of natural science.

(1) Sometimes natural science illuminates the commonly received interpretation of texts. Dr. Chalmers brought the whole system of modern astronomy under tribute to the text, "Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." William Jay added to the clerical stock of thought by his use of the science of metallurgy to illustrate the text, "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." John Pye Smith and others have brought the science of physiology to enforce the text, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." A volume has been written on the religion of chemistry, which can not but be auxiliary to the exposition of many biblical texts. The science of anatomy has often been made to assist interpretations of the narratives of our Lord's crucifixion. A certain physician now living has probably been saved from infidelity by observing the unconscious truthfulness of the evangelists, in their account of the crucifixion, to anatomical facts which then were entirely unknown to science. No doubt can exist of the propriety of employing the fruits of natural science in homiletic service, in cases

like these, in which science directly illustrates and intensifies the commonly received interpretations of the Scriptures.

(2) Occasion for solicitude arises, however, in the minds of many, lest natural science, in other cases, should make havoc with exegesis. A homiletic question arises, therefore, to this effect, "Ought a preacher to disturb the popular mind by the homiletic use of scientific discoveries which seem to conflict with biblical exegesis?" The following well-known facts appear entitled to the weight of conclusive argument in the affirmative.

The weight of scholarly authority among commentators now admits the principle that scientific discovery may modify within certain limits our interpretation of the Scriptures. It can not be questioned that modern philology has yielded somewhat to natural science. Commentators may differ in detail as to what and how much should be yielded; but the weight of authority, by a vast preponderance, agrees in yielding something. The principle is admitted, that philology is not above admonition and instruction from other sciences. This fact should have great weight in guiding the ministrations of the pulpit. On questions of this nature the popular mind should be taught to follow the authority of Christian scholarship. We do incalculable injury if we encourage the people in a pious independence of learning in their interpretations of the Bible. It is unsafe for a preacher, even by silence, to allow a hiatus to grow between the popular faith and the results of learned investigation.

A second fact to be remembered is the one so often and so justly claimed by biblical philologians, — that science has never yet established facts inconsistent with

a natural interpretation of the Scriptures on philological principles. The truth of this position need not be argued now: it is too familiar to you. But its bearing on the policy of the pulpit for the future needs to be enforced. Two points, specially, we should claim as settled. One is that the controversy between science and exegesis has an accumulated history. Apparent collision between the two is no novelty. We should never treat it as a novelty in our own minds, nor allow an opponent to do so in discussing the claims of the Scriptures. Very much is lost with the people, if we lose a certain prestige to which the history of this controversy entitles us, by seeming ourselves to come to it, or permitting our opponents to do so, *de novo*, as if the conflict were one in which nothing had as yet been settled, and nothing, therefore, could at present be assumed. We should always start with the indisputable claim that the conflict has a history.

The other point is, that, setting aside the question of the inspiration of the Scriptures, a philosophical argument may be constructed in their defense, founded upon the history of this controversy. Candid philology has never yet been contradicted by candid science, and it is a philosophical inference that it never will be. Presumed contradictions in numerous instances have been disproved by the final conclusions of authorities on both sides. Philology has modified its interpretations. True; but science has modified its claims; some it has abandoned; others it has qualified. Natural science has shifted its ground more frequently and more rapidly than biblical philology has done. The result thus far is, that, with no disparagement to either, each has approached the other. On several great topics once in dispute there is no longer any

respectable debate between them. They see eye to eye. The point of the argument for exegesis is that sound philological principles have not been abandoned. Science has created no necessity for the surrender of them. They have only been defined more accurately. Exegesis understands itself better than ever before, and is all the stronger for its changes of base.

It follows that the pulpit need not be disturbed by the occurrence of new points of contact between natural science and exegesis. These will occur as old ones have occurred. The time may come when the most candid and the most reverent attitude of mind respecting them will be one of temporary suspense. As honest men we may be obliged sometimes to suggest probable interpretations rather than those of which we feel assured. Even possible conceptions of the inspired meaning may be temporarily given for the want of better. Be it so: temporary suspense of confident exegesis is no new thing: the Bible has survived many such periods. We should not be alarmed. Nor should we ever intimate to the people a doubt from which they might reasonably infer that our faith is disturbed. The pulpit should never tremble at the shaking of a spear. Faith ought not to waver at a phenomenon which has become almost periodical in the history of opinion. Timid utterances from the pulpit under such suspenses of interpretations are like the fright of savages at an eclipse. Wait. Teach the people to wait. Teach them intellectual patience. The history of such phenomena in the past is a pledge for the future. What if hereditary theories of inspiration have to undergo revision? This is no novelty. Inherited faith can scarcely suffer a ruder shock than it received and lived through when the Copernican astronomy first met the word of God

The current theories of inspiration were revolutionized by that apparent collision. Yet how simple a thing that revolution seems to us now! How securely we smile at the popes who tried to throttle it! Why, then, should we fear to encounter similar revolutions in the future? Why, for instance, should we fear the Darwinian speculations, be their conclusions what they may? Is there not here a philosophical argument altogether independent of the divine authority of the Scriptures, and yet an argument so simple that it can often be made available for anchoring the faith of the people in the Bible? I can not but think that the pulpit itself frequently needs toning up to a more philosophic confidence in the destiny of the Scriptures.

(3) This leads me to observe that an educated clergy must bear some opprobrium caused by the reckless claims of an uneducated clergy. Ignorant and partly educated preachers do immense injury to the pulpit by their blind hostility to science. They assert claims in behalf of inspiration which can not possibly be sustained. Christian scholarship has no desire to sustain them. Christian ignorance insists on interpretations at which the intelligence of the world laughs, and over which the intelligence of the Church mourns. When zeal in opposing the science of infidels intemperately charges infidelity upon science, infidelity gets the best of the argument. A reaction to the discredit of clerical candor and clerical learning is inevitable. We must, therefore, take this into account in adjusting the policy of the pulpit. We should be more cautious to do justice to the facts of science, because we must bear the brunt of the conflict at a point where we are weakened by our own allies. Our strategy should be simply that of candor and courage. Not only admit all that

science can fairly claim, but admit it with the coolness of one who can afford to do it; admit it with the magnanimity of one who claims his enemy for a friend. As interpreters, we claim science as the tributary of the Bible. The hostility is only apparent, and that appearance is but temporary. We should act upon this conviction. We can afford to be generous; for all that we give will return to us again.

(4) A final fact, which you have doubtless anticipated me in uttering, is that the policy here recommended is the only one which can be permanently successful. The popular mind has a very brief and blunt logic, which it will inevitably oppose to a written revelation if it is once permitted to believe that the revelation can not bear the facts of the material world. In the long run, men will believe that they see what they see, and hear what they hear, let the book say what it may. Fire is fire: there are no two opinions about that. That is not a divine revelation which disputes the fact. The popular mind will feel not a moment's hesitation, if, by any blindness of the pulpit, infidelity can succeed in narrowing the conflict down to any such controversy as that. It is then no longer a conflict between faith and reason: it is a conflict between faith and the human senses: it is between faith in dead ages and the testimony of a man's own eyes. For permanent service, therefore, the only policy which is practicable to the pulpit is to hold science in its normal relations as the friend and ally of the Scriptures. Use it as a tributary; use it freely; use it trustfully; use it courageously.

IV. We pass now to the fourth topic in the discussion of the explanation; namely, its qualities.

1st, In the first place, an explanation should be such

as to give the true meaning of a text. Bearing in mind the preliminary remark already made, that we are considering the theory of explanations with reference, not to the explanatory fragment of a topical sermon alone, but to the whole subject of expository preaching as well, the rule now before us is evidently fundamental to a large proportion of evangelical preaching. We have, on a former occasion, considered the question of the use of interpolated texts and of mistranslated texts. A practical question distinct from that occurs in every preacher's experience. It is, "May we employ a popular or an inherited misinterpretation of a text for the sake of homiletic advantages attending such a use of it?" Such advantages doubtless exist. Effective sermons are preached on such misinterpretations. Souls have been saved by such sermons. Still the obvious reply to the inquiry must be in the negative; and this, on substantially the same principles as those applied to the use of interpolations and mistranslations.

(1) The meaning of the text *is* the text. The inspired thought constitutes the text. A misinterpreted text is no part of the Bible.

(2) Moreover, many popular misinterpretations are inferior in homiletic value to the true interpretations. Many texts are more pertinent and beautiful and suggestive for the direct uses of the pulpit in their true version than in their commonly received perversion. An example of this occurs in the popular interpretation of Col. ii. 8: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit." This is misinterpreted commonly, as teaching the danger of the corrupting influence of philosophy upon religious doctrine. Both the pulpit and theological schools are responsible for encouraging this erroneous interpretation. The pas-

sage contains no such warning. It teaches a far more necessary and impressive lesson. Strictly interpreted, and translated into modern speech, this text means no more nor less than this: "Be on your guard, that no man may captivate you by religious sophistry." This idea, for the purposes of the pulpit to say the least, is vastly superior to that which has been so often foisted into the passage, of the danger of philosophy in corrupting systems of theology. So it will be found to be in the large majority of instances. The true sense of a text exegetically expounded is its best sense for homiletic use.

(3) It should be further observed, that the past and present usage of the pulpit respecting truthfulness of interpretation is not entirely trustworthy. Explanations which exegesis has exploded are sometimes retained by the pulpit for their homiletic usefulness. Preachers often employ in the pulpit explanations of texts which they would not defend in an association of scholars. The pulpit suffers in its exegetical practice by retaining for polemic uses explanations which originated in an abuse of philosophy. I do not say in the use of philosophy. We have seen that there is a legitimate use of philosophy, within certain limits, in aiding the discoveries and application of sound philology. But philosophy has often tyrannized over philology. In the defense of the creeds of the Church, the exigencies of philosophy have overborne the philological instinct of the popular mind, as well as the philological learning of the schools. A modern exegete affirms that the interpretation of the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans which makes it a description of Christian experience was never heard of in the Church till the time of Augustine. He originated it to support

his theory of original sin. He held the opposite interpretation, as now held by many German exegetes, till he was pressed in the argument with Pelagius. The authority of Augustine, and the force of his theology, have sent down to our own day the interpretation he then adopted.

Again: the pulpit often suffers, in its exegetical practice, from an unthinking acceptance of certain popular traditions. Where no homiletic nor polemic uses of texts are in question, certain traditional ideas are blended with the popular reading of the Scriptures, which the pulpit often adopts without inquiry into their biblical authority. For example: the idea that Mary Magdalene was a harlot is generally assumed in homiletic explanations of her history. This is the popular idea. From this is derived a popular title for asylums for fallen women. But there is no evidence in the Scriptures that she was any thing worse than the victim of demoniacal possession. Yet the popular mind has assumed that the phrase "seven devils" (so often called "unclean spirits" in the Scriptures) means profligacy. Painters have seconded the assumption, and art has made it immortal. The pulpit has fallen in with it without much inquiry into the precise significance of the inspired narrative. Archbishop Whately says, that, when he once ventured to question the popular theory, the Scriptures were confidently referred to by his opponent as proof conclusive against him. But the only evidence was found to be the table of contents which formed the heading of the chapter in our English version.

Still further: the pulpit suffers, in its exegetical authority, from the habit of spiritualizing all parts of the Scriptures indiscriminately. Ancient usage justi-

fied any use of a text, which, by any eccentric laws of association, could be made serviceable to any practical religious impression. Popular commentaries have largely contributed to this abuse. Some of them no preacher can read respectfully without insensibly surrendering somewhat of his integrity of exegetical taste.

Such are the more important of the reasons for the caution which I have advanced, that the past and present usage of the pulpit respecting truthfulness of interpretation is not entirely trustworthy. You can not safely accept that usage as authority. It is improving, but it is no model for a youthful ministry. Do not be misled by it. Form your own model, and let it be one which scholarship, and good taste, and good sense can approve.

(4) In further consideration of the question before us, let it be observed that a want of hermeneutic accuracy in the explanation of the Scriptures is hazardous to the authority of the pulpit. A preacher is in danger of great inconsistencies of interpretation who accepts any other ultimate guide in his expositions than that of hermeneutic science. "Ultimate guide," I say; for the legitimacy of the influence of philosophy and of natural science, as proximate guides, has been admitted. That is, they legitimately help to define and discover principles of biblical hermeneutics. But, when those principles are settled, their authority is final. A preacher puts in peril the power of his pulpit, if he fails to recognize this, and to act upon it. He will often make the Scriptures self-contradictory.

A more subtle danger is that of awakening the silent conviction in the minds of hearers that a preacher's interpretations are not trustworthy. Hearers are more shrewd than is often supposed in detecting a real weak-

ness in the pulpit. As strength makes itself felt, so does weakness, when hearers can not define either, or tell their sources. It matters little what it is, a weakness will be discovered. The common people may know little of the laws of interpretation, but they will discover the fact, if these laws are often violated by their religious teachers. First in the form of a suspicion, then in the form of an impression, and at length in the form of a conviction, the feeling will find its way among them, that, whatever else their pastor may be, he is not a safe interpreter of the Scriptures. He adds nothing to their knowledge of God's word. They do not feel assured of his accuracy in the use of biblical language. A commentary like Barnes's Notes appeals to their common sense more satisfactorily. It needs no argument to prove, that, if this is the silent impression which the pulpit makes upon a people, the prestige of that pulpit is in peril.

You will be struck with the fact, when you become familiar with the ministry, that there are two classes of men in the profession: there are the men who sustain the pulpit, and the men whom the pulpit sustains. There are preachers whom the profession carries. They are so much dead weight. They add nothing to its power of movement. They do nothing which a layman might not do as well. As laymen themselves, they would be as useful as they are, except for this fact, — that they gain something from the glamour of professional connections. Such men are the first to be overwhelmed by the rising tide of biblical thought and biblical enthusiasm which they do not understand, and of which they can make no use. Infidelity starts inquiries, and Christian thought seconds them, which such men can not answer. They can only plod on in

what they call more practical ways, and in time the Church drops them. Yet a moderate amount of biblical learning, kept constantly fresh by biblical study, would save such men.

(5) This view is further enforced by the fact that biblical science is advancing more rapidly than any other with which the pulpit has directly to do. No other has received such a solid, enduring impulse as this has during the last fifty years. It has far more palpable results of progress to show than speculative theology. One cause and one consequence of this is the constant appearance of new commentaries and other works expository of the Scriptures. No other department of sacred learning is now multiplying books so rapidly as this. The literature of it changes with every decade of years. Few other books of solid worth are so soon displaced by later authorities as books of comment on the Bible. In no other department does a pastor's library need such frequent weeding and replenishing as in this.

This rapidity of growth in biblical science is vital to the tastes and habits of a preacher. Is it not easy to see how fatally a pastor may be left in the rear of biblical scholarship? It will never do to plod on in old ways of exegesis, content with the ancient interpretations of texts, yet hoping to be sustained as religious authorities with the people, merely because we build useful sermons on such interpretations. You might as sensibly teach in colleges the Ptolemaic system of astronomy. A preacher, then, has a very significant part of his life's work before him in qualifying himself to explain truthfully the meaning of his texts.

LECTURE XII.

THE EXPLANATION: QUALITIES.

HAVING discussed the topic of truthfulness of interpretation, we may pass more rapidly over several other principles which should regulate the qualities of expository discourse.

2d, The explanation should be such as to develop the meaning of the text in its full force. The signification of a text is one thing; its significance, another. The signification of a text is complete when its words are truthfully interpreted, and its grammatical idea expressed. Its significance is its signification clothed in all that is needful for vividness of impression. Lord Brougham, in laying down rules for constructing the narration in the plea of a lawyer, insists upon that which he terms "picturesque expression." A similar quality is often necessary in the explanation of a text. Purely philological processes, though underlying every thing, may, in many cases, be the least part of the work of exposition. Rhetorical invention must often supplement philology very largely in order to magnify a text to its true proportions.

(1) Picturesque explanations are especially necessary to the interpretation of an ancient volume like the Bible. The Scriptures are ancient, not antiquated. We must see them as we see the heavens, — through a

lens of large magnifying power. We must bring the distant near, must make the ancient fresh. This must be done by the highest finish of art. Do we exaggerate a text by such achievement of art? Not at all, in any legitimate use of it. The telescope does not exaggerate the size and brilliancy of Jupiter in the evening sky. We only approximate the truth, even thus.

(2) Picturesque exposition is necessary, also, to the interpretation of a foreign volume like the Bible. We must read the Bible through a foreign atmosphere. Language, climate, nationality, customs, politics, sciences, almost every thing that can give idiosyncrasies to a book, do give such to the Scriptures. And their idiosyncrasies are not our idiosyncrasies. To us they are more emphatically a foreign volume than the Iliad. Nor, on that account, is the Bible unpractical or unfit. But a multitude of its choicest passages do, for that reason, depend, for their significance to us, upon a reproduction to our vision of those foreign conditions in which they had their origin.

(3) Picturesque explanation is especially necessary to the popular mind. The people need to have done for them in this respect that which a scholar can do for himself. The people can often determine by the force of common sense the philological meaning of a text, when they have neither the learning nor the imaginative invention which are necessary to fill a text with its true significance. The pulpit must modernize and Americanize texts, and thus realize them to a modern and American audience. One of the radical diversities of talents in the ministry concerns this power of picturesque exposition. Some preachers are admirable expository critics: others are expository painters. It is not difficult to foresee from which of the two

classes the great preachers must come. So necessary is some degree of this power of picturesque invention to a versatile eloquence in the pulpit, that we may almost say of preachers what Alison says of historians, — that there never was a truly great one whose talents would not have made him eminent as a painter or a dramatic poet.

Here, in my judgment, is the hinge of the whole question of expository preaching. Its practicability depends on that which, for distinction's sake, may be termed the expository culture in the making of the preacher's own mind. If a preacher must be limited to one intellectual talent for the pulpit, let him pray for this. The preacher who has it in any large degree is always a power in the pulpit. He is always among the men who do not seek places, but whom places seek.

3d, A third quality of the explanation is that it should be such as not to give to a text more than its full force. One of the old divines calls the error of exaggerating exegesis a "bombarding of the text." It may be most happily illustrated by observing several of the immediate causes of it.

(1) One of these is an abuse of textual preaching. A man who always preaches textual sermons will inevitably "bombard" some texts. Many texts otherwise good do not naturally furnish the textual divisions of a good sermon. They are units. You can not divide them, and find your materials of thought in the several clauses, without inventing material which is not in them.

(2) Another cause of exaggerated explanation is unchastened rhetorical painting. An example will illustrate this. On the text, "Hear, ye O mountains, the Lord's controversy, an English preacher indulges in a

prolonged description of the biblical scenery at which the text hints. The word "mountain" is sufficient to reproduce in his fancy the whole picture of the vale of Chamouni. God and man are arrayed in a forensic debate in a vast amphitheater, and the surrounding mountains are summoned as spectators and listeners. The description is so elaborate and minute, that one who has seen the Alps imagines Mont Blanc and the Aiguille Verte bending in attentive silence to hear the argument *pro* and *con* between the infinite and the human disputants. Yet the more vivid the picture to the fancy of the reader, the more positive is the sense of inflation of the text. The text is a brief and solitary hint. Its grandeur consists in that glimpse which flashes for a moment, and is withdrawn. That is all that the text means. In that momentary gleam of sublimity its full force is given. By prolonged expansion it loses force, because the idea will not brook delay. It is like lightning. Fix the lightning in the sky long enough to describe a thunder-storm, and it becomes no more than a streak of yellow paint. So the most sublime and poetic hint of a truth may dwindle to the veriest humdrum of prose, if you attempt to paint it with all its correlatives and auxiliaries. A more chastened taste in rhetorical description would save a preacher from such violence to biblical poetry. This is one of a thousand instances in which the true taste is the inspired taste. You can not improve it.

(3) Another cause of the error before us is the subjection of exegesis to the service of polemic theology. An ancient Calvinistic divine endeavored to prove that the Ten Commandments are all violated by a belief in Arminianism. Arminians make a divinity of man's power, and thus break the First Commandment. They

bow down to this idol of their own creation, and thus break the Second Commandment. They talk of ineffectual grace, and thus take God's name in vain: so they break the Third Commandment. They commit spiritual adultery with their idol, and thus they break the Seventh Commandment. They take away from God the dignity which is his due, and thus they break the Eighth Commandment. They covet their elect neighbor's interest in Christ, and so break the Tenth Commandment. A similar sport is carried on with the whole Decalogue, as if the chief object of the divine conference with Moses on Mount Sinai had been to furnish him with rubbish to fling at Arminians. Such biblical exegesis can not be lifted in point of dignity above the sport of schoolboys.

(4) A similar cause of this error is the perversion of the Scriptures to uninspired political uses. Lord Macaulay relates an instance of the preaching of the Bishop of Ely before the court of King James II. A passage from one of the Chronicles was the text, and it was expounded to this effect: King Solomon represents King James; Adonijah was undoubtedly the forerunner of the Duke of Monmouth; Joab was a Rye-house conspirator; Shimei was a Whig; Abiathar was a Cavalier: and he called special notice to two clauses in the text, one of which, he said, implied that King James was superior to Parliament, and the other, that he alone had command of the militia.

(5) Yet a more inexcusable cause of the error before us is a heedless ignorance of biblical facts. A preacher a few years ago, whose imagination had been cultivated more assiduously than his biblical learning, discoursed upon the scene which took place between David and Abigail on the occasion on which she came

out to meet him for the purpose of moderating his anger against her husband Nabal. The preacher dwelt in glowing terms on the beauty of the Carmelite lady, and described, among other details of the interview, her appearance as she approached David on a richly caparisoned and prancing horse. The preacher himself was noted for his fondness for a good horse, which, in the view of some of his parishioners, exceeded the bounds of clerical dignity; and, as he dwelt with great zest upon the equestrian accomplishments of the beautiful rider, an old lady in the congregation gratified her secret distaste for that feature in her pastor's character by turning to her neighbor, and whispering that the sermon was "very handsome," but she "knew better," for the Bible said that Nabal's wife came out to meet David "on an ass." That horse belonged to the "Miltonic interpretation" of the Old Testament.

(6) Another cause of exaggerated exegesis is an abuse of prophecy. Dr. Arnold says that he has never read a commentary on the prophecies which does not, in some point or other, distort the truth of history to make it fit the prophecy. Yet the pulpit can be in this respect no other than the echo of commentaries. The biblical learning of the pulpit will scarcely ever rise above that of the schools.

(7) Perhaps the most violent cause of the error in question is found in the abuse of the Parables. The pulpit has been slow to learn that many incidents in the Parables teach nothing. They are expletive incidents, thrown in to round out the story. To find in them a profound spiritual sense is uninspired manufacture of thought. Inspiration and bibliolatry are in this respect at antipodes. Bibliolatry digs, awestruck, for the occult sense of words: inspiration is calmly con-

tent with common sense. What shall we say, then, of the following from Bishop Heber? On the Parable of the Good Samaritan, he says that the traveler represents the human race; his leaving Jerusalem symbolizes man's departure from God; Jericho is the synonym of the temptations of this world; the robbers are the devil and his angels; the priest signifies the sacrifices of the patriarchal age; the Levite is the Mosaic law; and the Samaritan is Christ. The bishop's good sense seems to have halted here. He adds, not as the discovery of his own genius, that the two pieces of silver "have been supposed" to signify the two sacraments which are left behind for the consolation of Christians, "till their good Samaritan shall return." Professor Stuart, in remarking upon this specimen of exegesis, used to ask whether "somebody" was not represented by the ass on which the Samaritan rode. Yet Bishop Heber was a sensible man. In the affairs of life he called water water, like the rest of us. Why should words and things in the Scriptures be interpreted and used as men never interpret them in any other book, or in the colloquial intercourse of life?

Such vagaries as these were once regarded as a part of the staple of the pulpit. By the ancient standard of pulpit eloquence the ingenuity of such conceits marked the rank of the preacher. The more original his invention, the more authoritative was his exegesis. The theory was that inspired language, because it was inspired, was an inexhaustible mine of hidden treasures of the fancy, in which every preacher might delve at will. He was the prince of preachers who could invent the interpretation least likely to suggest itself to the common reader or to be supported by his common sense. The struggle for liberty to interpret the Scrip-

tures by the rules of good sense, as men interpret the language of other books, has been long and hard-fought; and it is by no means ended.

4th, A fourth quality of an explanation is that it should be clear. An obscure explanation is a self-contradiction. Several causes of such obscurity deserve mention.

(1) One cause is ignorance of oriental life and of ancient civilization. A preacher can not himself understand certain portions of the Scriptures, if he is not familiar with Eastern and ancient usages. He should be a well-informed man in Asiatic researches. Even when the letter of a text is not misunderstood, the force of it may be lost for the want of culture in the department of general oriental knowledge.

(2) Another cause of obscurity of exposition is the needless use of technical phraseology. Terms technical to exegesis, to theology, to Christian experience, or even to biblical usage, should be employed, if at all, with caution. The Bible itself does not needlessly employ them. Even technicalities which the usage of the pulpit has made common are not always understood; if understood, they are but dimly so. They are like windows of ground glass.

(3) Another occasion of obscurity in the explanation is confusion of philosophical distinctions. It is a truism that the Scriptures are not inspired to teach philosophy. Yet philosophical distinctions underlie all sound exegesis, as they do the interpretation of all language. Such distinctions must often be stated to save a text from contradiction of other texts, or of the necessary beliefs of men. If, therefore, a preacher does not admit such distinctions, if he does not understand them, if they are overborne by his theology, if he dare

not accept them courageously, if he have not the skill to make them clear to others, he may leave such a text more obscure than he found it. The common sense of the people should rather be let alone in its reception of the Scriptures than be muddled by lame philosophizing.

As specimens of such texts, may be named passages respecting dependence and ability; passages respecting the causes of sin, like that concerning the hardening of Pharaoh's heart; passages respecting providence and decrees; passages respecting the power of prayer; and passages respecting inherited depravity. Many such texts involve the whole philosophy of the human will. To explain them truthfully, that philosophy must not be falsified nor ignored. A distinction must often be stated, when it is not expanded. When not stated, it must often be implied in the explanation. The preacher must have it in mind unexpressed. To the audience it is the invisible key. The door does not open unless the key is turned by a cunning hand.

(4) A further cause of obscurity in exposition is the want of naturalness of arrangement. Have you never listened to expositions in which the preacher seemed to touch every thing, and explain nothing? He handled every thing vigorously, it may be, yet nothing so as to leave a definite impression. In such a case the difficulty will often be found to be simply the want of natural order. Events are described, not in their actual nor in any probable, order of occurrence. Characters are grouped in relations which are not proportional. They remind one of a certain cartoon by Raphael, in which figures of half a ton's weight and some hundreds of pounds of fishes are crowded into a skiff not larger nor more seaworthy than a Swampscott dory. The preacher talks at random. He dances from the great

to the small, from the near to the remote, from the material to the spiritual, from the figurative to the literal, and back again, and forth anew, rambling with no order which seems such to a logical mind. He neglects nothing, yet explains nothing. His work results in a literary kaleidoscope.

5th, A fifth quality of an explanation is that it should, if possible, express positive opinions. A preacher should, if possible, have an opinion of his text for which, as an exegete, he is willing to be responsible. The following particulars are worthy of note on this topic.

(1) By far the major part of the Bible is susceptible of positive interpretation. Passages impracticable to exegesis are comparatively few: not one exists, probably, of vital moment. A preacher will find no very large part of the Bible closed to faithful biblical study. Any thing which is thus closed to him is not, for the time being, a canonical text for his pulpit.

(2) Moreover, expression of unsettled opinions of the meaning of the Scriptures does great injury to the pulpit. The pulpit is the place for a religious teacher. Some degree of authoritative instruction is essential to its power. Hearers have a right to expect defined and settled convictions from one whom they have chosen as their instructor. They do not want dogmatism; but they do demand, and justly, confidence of judgment. A man is not "apt to teach" who does not know what he believes. This is especially true when the meaning of the Scriptures is in question. If the pulpit does not know its own ground here, to the people it will seem to know nothing to the purpose. The well-known principle of all popular oratory is applicable here also, — that the popular faith is powerfully affected by the way

in which a preacher treats the foundation of his opinions. Other things being equal, the man who knows will be heard in preference to the man who only believes. He who believes will be heard in preference to the man who doubts. The Scriptures are the foundation of the pulpit. Texts are its pillars. In exegesis, if in any thing, a preacher needs confident opinions. Unsettled faith there ceases to be faith in any thing else with which a Christian pulpit is concerned. A pulpit skeptical as to the Scriptures becomes a floating island: the popular faith can anchor nothing to it.

(3) A Calvinistic theology, especially, requires positive exegesis on the part of its preachers. It is a strong theology. Say whatever else we may of it, it is an oaken theology. Its gnarled branches must be rooted in a deep and solid soil. Its destiny is to encounter tempests of the moral elements. Its life must be far under ground. No dawdling exegesis can support it; nor can any confidence in it as a system of truth be propagated from a pulpit which does not know whether it finds the system in the Scriptures or not. We must find it in the Scriptures, or nowhere. We must know it to be there, or the people will soon know nothing about it. It could not live beyond one generation in the faith of a people who should be thoroughly possessed of the skeptical spirit respecting its biblical foundations.

(4) The tactics of infidelity demand a positive exegesis in the pulpit. I allude here to the standing charge of infidelity, — that the Bible is not a self-consistent volume. This charge is often very effective with a certain ignorant and indolent type of popular skepticism. It declares that the Bible is an instrument on which any tune can be played. Learned and thoughtful infi

delity knows better than that; but that is the most facile way of neutralizing the biblical argument of the clergy with an unthinking and unlearned commonalty. The pulpit must rebut the charge, not by loud-mouthed denials, but by acting upon the assumption of its falseness. Preachers, by having positive opinions in biblical interpretation, and by expressing them positively, will bear down the charge. They need not pause to debate it.

(5) Turning, now, to some of the failures of preachers to exhibit a positive biblical faith, I remark that some fail unconsciously by a skeptical mannerism in their expositions. Have you not heard one explain a text with the forms of doubt, when nobody doubts, or can doubt, the truth of the explanation? "If this be the meaning of the Apostle;" "This seems to be the idea of the Prophet;" "Such may be supposed to be the design of the Psalmist;" "Probably our Lord meant to teach,"—these and similar formulæ of doubt are employed when there is no reasonable doubt. Commentators on the passages in question express no doubt. The preacher has no doubts. He speaks from the habit of affected wisdom. His impulse would be to speak of the certainty of death with a codicil of doubt in the case of a long-lived stock. I call this a skeptical mannerism. Contrast it with the robust style of apostolic preaching: "I am persuaded;" "Hereby we know;" "I say the truth in Christ;" "We have the mind of Christ;" "Know ye not?" "I have received of the Lord that which I delivered unto you;" "We use great plainness of speech;" "Great is my boldness of speech;" "The Spirit speaketh expressly;" "We know; we are confident, I say;" "Thus saith the Lord." In such varied and intense forms of speech the

inspired preachers express intense convictions. Theirs is an indubitable message. The Epistles of the New Testament seem as if written under oath.

(6) Failure in point of positiveness of exegesis sometimes results from constitutional timidity of opinion. In some minds original opinions are always the result of a trembling balance of probabilities. Which way the scale preponderates never seems absolutely certain. The opponents of Dr. Arnold used to say of him, — though on what grounds I can not imagine, — that he always woke up in the morning with the conviction that every thing was an open question.

(7) In other cases, the failure arises from an overbearing of the speculative upon the exegetical taste. The history of the religious opinions of some men is almost exclusively a dogmatic history. They have come at their opinions through the avenue of speculation, not through that of exegesis, but substantially to the exclusion of exegesis. Consequently for a long time, perhaps for a lifetime, biblical interpretation is of practically no account in their habit of thinking. Such minds make inefficient exegetes in the pulpit. They are so much bolder as theologians than as exegetes, they speculate so much more confidently than they interpret, they are so much more at home in natural than in revealed theology, and in revealed theology they are so much more fond of its catechetical than of its biblical forms, that, in the interpretation of the Scriptures, they never make the impression of authorities.

LECTURE XIII.

THE EXPLANATION: QUALITIES.

6TH, Continuing the discussion of the qualities of the explanation, we notice, as a sixth quality, unity of exposition. This is an exceedingly subtile quality. We may sacrifice it unconsciously.

(1) It is often sacrificed by the want of unity of text. If a text be a double, triple, quadruple structure, no oneness can grow out of it. Any discussion of such a text will resemble the rattling of a handful of marbles. This suggests one secret of failure in expository preaching. I once proposed to an association of clergymen the inquiry, what their chief difficulty was in such preaching; and their answer almost unanimously was "The want of unity." For this reason they could not interest in that kind of preaching, either their hearers or themselves. The problem is how to interweave the textual materials into one fabric. The sermon is apt to be a string of beads with nothing but the string to make them one. The preacher's instinct for unity of aim is balked at the outset, and the hearer's instinct for singleness of impression is balked in the end.

Where lies the remedy? I answer, it lies in limiting expository preaching to passages of the Scriptures which have unity of structure. Leave more desultory methods of exposition to Bible-classes. Reserve for

the pulpit only such paragraphs of inspired material as admit of unity of discussion. Search for groups of inspired thoughts. These are very abundant. Often, expository treatment of them is the very best that can be given, — the richest, the most original, the most interesting, the most useful. A young preacher's vexed problem of originating materials of sermons is solved when he makes the discovery of the inexhaustible resources of the Bible in unified passages. Many a group of biblical verses has as definite a unity as a constellation in the heavens. You will soon be surprised and delighted by your discovery of the extent to which the Scriptures can be mapped out in such groups. No preacher need despair of success in expository preaching for the want of good homiletic material for it.

(2) Unity of explanation is often sacrificed by a needless suggestion of conflicting interpretations. Sometimes a contested passage may need this method. In the majority of cases, however, it is not needed; and, if not necessary, it is impolitic. We have no occasion for our enemy's guns, unless we can shift them around. Why take the trouble to spike them even, if they can not be used against us? Homiletic policy does not admit that it is a matter of indifference whether hearers shall receive impression from one force, or from four. It admits of no such self-counteracting and disjointing process of instruction. A mind intent on one object does not work so. Such a mind marches to its object by one path: it chooses its own path: it shuts out all needless glimpses of divergent and opposite avenues. So far a preacher is an advocate, not a judge.

(3) Unity of explanation is also sacrificed by irrelevant verbal exposition. I have here in mind one of the most singular indulgences of pedantry that has ever

afflicted oral speech. It is that of hunting a word through its whole philological history in the Scriptures. A few instances occur in which the true meaning of a word is a growth which can be determined only by such historical pursuit. "Baptize," "ransom," "justify," "sacrifice" are specimens of such words. They are the crucial words of certain texts, some of which are the crucial texts of systems of theology. But such words are rare; and the usage to which I refer is not limited to them, nor to any choice selection. It has spread itself enormously, until, in some pulpits, it has become the stereotyped and only method of exposition. Critical commentary is thus imported whole into sermons, with no reference at all to any homiletic demand. The emphatic word, and sometimes a word which has not even the dignity of emphasis, is pursued with philological fury up and down and across the biblical records. Homiletically the result is a ludicrous compound of dullness and irrelevancy.

An example will most clearly define this error. You will see from it that my description is no caricature of fact. A Presbyterian clergyman in a Southern city once preached a sermon on these words, "It containeth much." The text was a fragment broken from a verse in the Book of Ezekiel, "Thou shalt drink of thy sister's cup: . . . it containeth much." The passage is a comminatory one addressed to the ancient people of God. The preacher, probably in that vacuity of thought which is apt to dilute the beginnings of sermons, pounced upon the word "it," which had the distinction of heading the text. He remarked, that, as the context indicated, "the word had for its antecedent the word 'cup.' 'Thy sister's cup: it containeth much:' thou shalt drink of it; of thy sister's cup shalt

thou drink; it containeth much: a full cup, brethren, it containeth much: yes, thou shalt drink of thy sister's cup; it containeth much, — these are the words of our text."

I give you in the rough my impressions of the sermon after thirty years, not claiming verbal accuracy. The impression of the exposition, however, which has remained in my mind, justifies this inane mouthing of the text as the preliminary to the following exposition. The exegesis of the word "cup" was the burden of it. I do not exaggerate in saying that he told us of the great variety of senses in which the word "cup" is used in the Scriptures. A marvelous word is it. The Bible speaks of the "cup of salvation," and, again, of the "cup of consolation;" then it is the "cup of trembling," and the "wine-cup of fury." Babylon is called a "golden cup." The cup of Joseph which was hidden in the sack of Benjamin was a "silver cup." The Pharisees, we are told, "made clean the outside of the cup;" and, "he shall not lose his reward who giveth a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple." And therefore in the text we are told, "Thou shalt drink of thy sister's cup: it containeth much." The preacher rambled on in this manner, with his finger on the right page of the concordance, till at last the sound of the word "cup" was made familiar to the audience; and having accumulated, as I have in this paragraph, a respectable bulk of "sounding brass," the preacher announced as his subject of discourse the future punishment of the wicked.

(4) Unity of explanation may be sacrificed by erroneous representations of the "double sense" of certain biblical passages. This is a peculiarity of biblical style which it is exceedingly difficult to define clearly

to the popular mind. Few commentators succeed well in defining it to the clerical mind. Preachers may destroy the unity of impression made by the explanation of the passages in question, in either of two ways. One is that of distinguishing the two senses of the language too literally. The theory of the double sense, which some advance, borders hard on the Swedenborgian principle of exterior and interior interpretation. Senses absolutely independent of each other are attributed to the words of a text, with no reason for the double sense which is palpable to common sense. A recondite sense superinduced upon an obvious sense, a spiritual sense affixed to a literal sense, a prophetic sense subjoined to a declarative sense, — such is the "double sense" as a hearer obtains it from some pulpits.

The popular mind is impatient of mystic laws of speech, of which it finds no parallel in popular usage. It can not be made to see why two such interpretations should be injected into the same words with any more consistency or continuity of thought than three or thirty. The door seems open to Swedenborg, or any other maniacal interpreter, if such a theory of the double sense be recognized. The people, therefore, dismiss Swedenborg none the less, but the double sense as well.

The true theory of the double sense, as I understand it, always involves the idea of type and antitype. This is not undisputed, and I can not pause to defend it: I can only explain it. The senses of the language are not arbitrarily two: they are reasonably twofold. The reason is obvious. The language is true of the type, first for what it is in itself, then because it is the type of something to come after in the order of time. And to that antitype it passes over with an expanded

and a deepened meaning. Was a Messianic Psalm true of David? Yes. How? First on his own account and as a literal expression of his own experience; then because he was a type of the Messiah; and therefore its meaning passes on to a wider and profounder application to Christ. The one application is an outgrowth of the other. It is the prolongation, or, as the Scriptures so often pronounce it, the fulfillment, of the other. A certain continuity of thought connects them. Standing back of the type, we look through the language descriptive of it to the antitype, as if in perspective. They lie in the same line; the first being suggestive of the second, and the second the fullness of the first.

This is a conception of the double sense, — is it not? — which can be made intelligible to the popular mind without violence to its common sense. A reason is obvious why two, and only two, senses should be attributed to the language. It is a conception which helps marvelously the interpretation of some of the Psalms, and some of the prophecies of the Old Testament, and some of our Lord's predictions of the final judgment. I have called it a peculiarity of the Scriptures. To what extent it may be called a fundamental law of language in the interpretation of history is an open question. Natural science has revealed a similar law of type and antitype in the successions of natural history, which very strikingly reminds one of the double sense of the Scriptures. Whether or not it runs into all history in any such way as to make itself intelligible in the philosophy of events is an interesting query. That the Scriptures recognize it in certain grand responses between the Old Testament and the New is beyond reasonable dispute. Nothing of the style of innuendo, or of play upon words, degrades it.

The same language expresses two things, because they are alike, and are divinely constituted in certain correspondences to each other in the eternal order.

The other method by which the theory of the double sense may be made to sacrifice unity of exposition is that of leaving the full sense of the text in obscurity. The difficulty here is a want of didactic vigor in the preacher. If he have optical vigor so that he sees for himself, he has not power to make others see through the media of his exposition. A cloud is left overhanging the text in any sense. Passages to which the theory of the double sense is applicable are difficult themes for the pulpit at the best. We may prudently defer the treatment of them till we are confident of our power to make them clear.

7th, A seventh quality of an explanation is that it should be as concise as clearness and fullness will permit. Whatever value conciseness has in any thing it has with special emphasis in expository discourse.

(1) Observe especially that in a topical sermon the explanation is a preliminary. Like all other preliminaries, it should be dispatched rapidly.

(2) In either a topical or an expository sermon, conciseness itself stimulates interest. It is an interesting virtue in the explanation of any thing, that it be given briskly. Condense. Make every word significant. Say nothing in a rotary way. Let every step be an advance. Hearers are pleased with you, and pleased with your subject, and pleased with themselves, if they find themselves able to seize your thought nimbly. Have you not been sensible of the difference in this respect between different expounders? One will pare and peel and slice and scrape a text, as if it were an apple. Another will crack it as if it were a nut

With the one, you must bide your time: the other gives you no time to spare. You have no question which quickens your interest the more skillfully.

(3) In no part of a discourse is the temptation to indolent composition more insidious than in the explanation. The very nature of the process invites delay. We often dally with an explanatory thought when we should not think of doing so with a link in an argument. Even an illustration tells us more plainly when we have done with it, and motions to us to pass on. Nothing but exhortation equals the explanation in its allurements to long-winded speech. Some of the most decisive failures in expository preaching are due largely to its length. If any doubt exists as to the interest of an audience in an expository discourse, condense; pack your thoughts; shorten the process; make haste; come quickly to the gist of things; and you are sure of one element of success. This simple expedient will often save an expository sermon from falling flat.

(4) Conciseness of explanation is sacrificed in several ways. One is by explaining things which in themselves need no explanation. We shall notice again the pettifogging method of explanation. I name it now only as contributing to needless expansion.

Another method is by explaining things of which an explanation is not demanded by the use which is to be made of the text. The distinction which we have observed between the work of the preacher and that of the commentator is forgotten. Much that deserves exposition may not demand it now. No homiletic necessity for it may exist in the aim of the sermon: if so, no exegetical demand at present concerns the preacher or the hearer. Take, for example, the text, "The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now command

eth all men everywhere to repent." Suppose that you preach a sermon from that text on the obligation of all men to repent. Why should you dwell on the phrase "winked at"? Why expand at all the principle of God's toleration of evils in one age which he condemns in another? Why say any thing of the first half of the text? Why not proceed at once to the last half as containing the germ of your sermon? It does so, and every thing back of it is, for your purpose, rubbish. Yet probably four out of five of the sermons preached on this standard text begin with a more or less elaborate discussion of the principle involved in the phrase "winked at." Why is this? Only because this phrase suggests an easy beginning. It points to something to say. It is the prop underneath the keel, which, knocked away, permits the vessel to launch. That is to say, the reason of the unnecessary exposition is vacuity of thought in the mind of the preacher. Keep to your text, not as an independent passage, but as a text. Use it for your aim, nothing more. Act the preacher, not the commentator.

A third method by which conciseness of explanation may be sacrificed is by dwelling needlessly upon things incidental to the text. Tediousness in the detail of familiar facts bearing feebly on the homiletic purpose unstrings the tension of interest in the early part of many sermons. Just then and there, when and where you need to accumulate and to husband resources of interest, this error often introduces a debilitating prolixity which makes the whole discourse flabby. Try the criticism on some of your own sermons. See if a brisk hint at the scenes of a very familiar parable is not of more worth to your conclusion than a laborious recapitulation of them. Make the experiment of

trusting something to the intelligence and the memory of your hearers respecting a miracle which they know by heart. "Mr. Jones," said Chief Justice Marshall on one occasion, to an attorney who was rehearsing to the Court some elementary principle from Blackstone's Commentaries, "there are some things which the Supreme Court of the United States may be presumed to know." Many an audience would give the same reproof to some expository preachers, if they could. Their defenseless position should shield them from assumptions of their ignorance which they can not resent. Be generous, therefore, to the intelligence of your hearers. Assume sometimes that they know the Lord's Prayer. Do not quote the Ten Commandments as if they had been revealed to you, instead of Moses. The Sermon on the Mount is a very ancient specimen of moral philosophy: do not cite it as if it were an enactment of the last Congress. The Parables are older than the "Meditations" of Aurelius Antoninus; why, then, rehearse them as if from the proof-sheets of the first edition? In a word, why suffer the minds of your audience to be more nimble than your own, and to outrun you?

A fourth method by which conciseness of exposition is sacrificed is by evasion of the real difficulties of a text. Explanation which is afraid of its own aim is apt to spin itself out in wretched commonplaces. Did you ever watch the last expiring spurt of an engine-hose whose power is spent? How it droops, and splashes, and wriggles, and drips, and drizzles, and spits, and gurgles, and wets everybody, sending a jet where it is least expected, and wasting its contents in puddles, until everybody frets, and is glad when it stops! Like that are expositions which expound nothing.

8th, An explanation should preserve the dignity which is becoming to the treatment of inspired thought Believers in inspiration repel debasement of it in expo sition as they do in the choice of texts.

(1) It is, therefore, a homiletic error to explain that which needs no explanation. This error not only destroys conciseness, but it chiefly offends the dignity of expository speech. It degrades exposition to putter over it in a pettifogging way, trusting nothing to the good sense of an audience, and assuming nothing as already known to them. On the text, "I am the good shepherd," said a preacher in the chapel of this Seminary, — and that after twenty years of experience in the pulpit, — "a sheep, my brethren, is a very defenseless animal. A shepherd is one who takes care of sheep." If a New England audience can not be supposed to know what a sheep is, what do they know? Simplicity in preaching is not driveling.

In gauging the intelligence of an audience, we must take into account the popular use of commentaries. Some of these have had an immense circulation. Barnes's Notes alone have been circulated to the extent of a million of copies. That which fifty years ago would have been an addition to the biblical knowledge of the people may not be such now. A serious difficulty attending expository preaching now arises from the familiarity of multitudes with the most significant parts of the Bible. He must be a learned biblical scholar who can add any thing to the biblical knowledge of some hearers.

(2) Another offense against dignity of exposition is the suggestion of fanciful interpretations. What shall be said of this example from Dr. Gill? In expounding the phrase "Abba Father." he remarks that

the word "abba" reads the same spelled backwards or forwards, and that "this suggests that God is our Father in adversity as well as in prosperity." Suggests to whom? To anybody but the Rev. Dr. Gill? We can readily conceive how it should have disgusted a robust mind like Robert Hall's, and led him to say to a Welshman who expressed the wish that Dr. Gill's works had been written in Welsh, "I wish so, too, sir; for then I never should have wasted my time and patience in reading them."

LECTURE XIV.

THE EXPLANATION: QUALITIES, LOCALITY.

9TH, Continuing the discussion of the qualities of the explanation, we remark in the ninth place, that over against the conservative principle of the dignity of exposition, considered in the last lecture, must be admitted another; namely, that exposition should be made interesting. It is a truism that dignity and dullness are often synonymous. Have you not observed that the act of yawning closes the inner chamber of the ear, so that you are partially deafened by it? That is as true morally as it is physiologically. We may, therefore, better tolerate a respectable eccentricity than be afflicted with tameness.

(1) To promote interest in expository preaching, cultivate the "picturesque expression" recommended by Lord Brougham. Regulated by a chastened taste, that will insure interest. Dr. Arnold is represented by his pupils at Rugby as having been in his biblical discourses the freshest man they ever knew. One of his pupils writes of him, "Our Lord's life and death were to him the most interesting facts that ever happened; as real, as exciting, as any recent event in history. His rich mind filled up the naked outline of the gospel." That was the secret, — "his rich mind." If a preacher's mind is filled with biblical stores, and cultivated

in biblical tastes, and alive with interest in biblical history, biography, prophecy, so that Gethsemane and Calvary are as real to him as Waterloo and Gettysburg, he can scarcely fail to make expository preaching interesting.

(2) Certain expedients of study are valuable aids to the faculty of interesting exposition. Of these, one is familiarity with books of Eastern travel. A preacher should know something of the latest literature of oriental travel and exploration. A fresh mind must have fresh food. Another expedient is a study of the old English pulpit. Not for accuracy of exegesis, but for the means of clothing it in forms which will allure the popular mind, the old English preachers are excellent helpers. They were not trustworthy exegetes; but they abound with fresh illustrations, original uses of the Scriptures, and quaint remarks in the way of comment. The events and characters of the Old Testament especially were very real to their imagination. Familiarity with them will put a preacher in possession of much material of biblical illustration, which, whatever else may be said of it, was fresh and pithy and luminous. A quotation from that source may sometimes be the one thing wanting to light up a modern exposition, and make it interesting to modern hearers.

Again: a department of a commonplace book may be made a valuable help to the interest of expository sermons. Collections of biblical miscellanies, facts of science, incidents of travel, original comments, quotations, anecdotes, infidel concessions, uses of certain texts by illustrious preachers, uses of other passages on certain death-beds, notes of certain conversions attributable to specific texts, connections of other texts with Christian hymnology, missionary experiences in the

use of others, — in brief, every thing of a miscellaneous character which explains, or illustrates, or enforces, or magnifies, or adorns any scriptural passage, is worth preserving.

(3) A preacher needs courage to use the common stock of expository thought. There is no need of straining after expository conceits. Here, as elsewhere, the common stock of thought is the great bulk of true thought. To the popular mind it is the most necessary thought: therefore, for homiletic use, it is the most powerful thought. Jeremy Taylor defends the simplicity of the materials and the structure of his sermons by saying that he cares little if any witty censurer shall say that he has learned from them nothing but that which he knew before; "for no man ought to be offended that sermons are not curious inquiries after new nothings, but pursuances of old truths." But Jeremy Taylor, in his expositions as in other things, was "golden-mouthed." He threw a gorgeous wealth of illustration around his "old truths" and simple plans of thought. Says an English critic, "We may compare one of his discourses to such a country church as we sometimes see in these days, where some loving hand has covered the simple work of village masons with carvings, and filled the old windows with prophets pictured on the panes."

Old biblical truths can be handled in this manner without conceits and without straining; and, thus handled, they are the elementary forces of the pulpit. A preacher needs to believe this. Trust the common stock of biblical thought, and use it courageously. That very courage lifts a preacher's mind to a loftier level of working. Faithful manipulation of such materials is the thing needed. Do not use them, in the

bulk, at second-hand. Work them over. Reconstruct them. Polish them. Put them through the laboratory of your own thinking. Get fresh robes for them from your own emotions. Do something, or the other thing, or all things, which shall make them your own. Quicken thus your own interest in them; and the result will be, that, when they go from you, they will uplift hearers to the heavens.

In illustration of the principle here involved, let me cite a criticism by William Taylor, a contemporary of Walter Scott. Southey's "Madoc" and Scott's "Lay of the Last Minstrel" were rivals for the popular favor. In about one year after their publication Scott had received above a thousand pounds for the "Lay," and Southey had received, as he says, "just three pounds, seventeen shillings, and a penny." William Taylor, commenting on the contrast, writes as follows: "Sir Walter's great success surprises me. Yet he has this of prudence, that, far from scorning the ordinary, he dwells on *our* manners, *our* opinions, *our* history, *our* most familiar preconceptions. Goldsmith, the most popular of recent poets, is remarkable for saying well what was most obvious to say. Tasso is another dealer in finished commonplace, stolen, everybody knows where. The far-fetched is not ware for the numerous class of readers." This is a gem of criticism. The principle here advanced runs through all popular literature. The success of expository preaching depends largely upon it.

10th, The explanation should be free from certain scholastic weaknesses. In no other part of a sermon is a preacher tempted more insidiously to unconscious scholasticism than in this.

(1) We should especially avoid the needless use of the technical terms of philology. An exposition must

often be more learned than it should seem to be. Never import into a sermon the paraphernalia of a critical commentary. A double reason enforces this caution. Such technicalities are not intelligible to the people; and, if they were, they are not suited to oral address.

(2) On the same principle, we should avoid needless allusions to the authority of manuscripts, ancient versions, various readings, and the original of the English text. The ancient conceit of English preachers in sprinkling their discourses with quotations from Greek and Latin classics was not, in their circumstances, so grave an error as the subjection of the Scriptures to scholastic associations in the minds of the people would be now. Yet that classicism of the English pulpit well-nigh ruined one entire age of that which was otherwise magnificent preaching. To test the principle one asks, "May we ever quote a word or phrase from the original Greek or Hebrew?" I answer, circumlocution to avoid a foreign language in popular oral speech is always in good taste. Say, therefore, "The word in the original which is translated thus," or, "The more exact translation here would be," etc.

(3) The principle involved in this rule should lead us, also, to avoid a pedantic citation of unfamiliar commentaries. Possibly a blatant caviler here and there might be overawed by the names of half a score of mediæval exegetes of whom he had never heard. But Dean Swift's advice to a young clergyman is more pertinent, when he urges him not to "perplex a whole audience of sensible people for the sake of three or four fools who are past grace."

(4) Yet this same principle should lead us to avoid the affectation of independence of scholastic authority. Never give a thrust at the principle of authority in

the attempt to vindicate, or to exercise the right of private judgment. You have, perhaps, an original interpretation of a text: commentaries do not support you. Very well. Exercise your right; but why bray about it? Exercise it modestly: let alone the slaughtered commentators. Speak your own mind without disturbing theirs. It may be that you are right; but the probabilities are five to one that your hearers will not believe that you are, if you fling your opinion in the face of half a dozen venerable teachers who were venerable before you were born. Treat it as a misfortune if you must part company with *other* learned men.

The popular mind feels by instinct a more profound respect for scholarly authority than we often give it credit for. Underneath the current of democratic scorn of books and bookish men, there is an innate reverence for the thing which is thus depreciated. Another element, also, you will discover in the popular instinct on this subject; that is, a sense of a preacher's professional infidelity in such flings at scholastic tribunals. It is human nature to respect a man who respects his own order. It is natural that educated mind should stand by educated mind; that culture should respect culture; that cultivated taste should respond to cultivated taste; that scholarly opinion should defer to scholarly opinion. The thinking common people, who know enough to know what education is, feel this profoundly.

This popular instinct prompts respect for clerical fidelity to commentators. Illiterate men, when they are men of sense, like to know that there are libraries, and universities, and historic monuments of learning, and magnificent traditions of ancient wisdom, and mys-

terious insignia of intellectual authority, back of the pulpit. They do not care to see the libraries and the monuments; but they are glad to know that they are there, and that their religious teachers know all about them, and respect them. A parishioner who is a man of good sense receives a silent accession of respect for his pastor, and for every sermon that he preaches, from merely entering that pastor's study, and glancing at a large and well-used library. The very sight of books is an impressive spectacle to an uneducated man of sense. The man must be far down towards barbarism who does not take off his hat amidst such surroundings.

An educated preacher, therefore, who respects himself, is the representative of all the libraries to his people. The wisdom of all the ages is tributary to his sermons. No other man can be master of the situation as he can be, if he appreciates the situation, and respects his opportunity. He unites in himself the authority of his teachers and the sympathy of his hearers. He is on the middle ground between the heights of the university and the popular lowlands; he blends the principle of authority with the principle of sympathy; and that is a union of forces which no other combination of moral powers can equal.

11th, An explanation should, if possible, be in keeping with the rhetorical structure of the text. "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality;" — what kind of an exposition, rhetorically considered, does this text invite? A preacher once introduced a sermon upon it by observing that the word "mortal" is from the Latin word *mors*, "death," and therefore means "deathly;" "immortal" is from the Latin words *mors*, and *in*, which means "not,"

and therefore the entire word means "not deathly." Is the philological dissection of such a text in sympathy with it? Does it prolong and sustain the impression which the text itself creates? Another preacher, commenting on the text, "Now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face," pounced upon the word "glass" as containing the most transparent idea he could find in the text; and in his vitreous exposition he contrived to find a place for the fact that glass was first used for windows in the third century of the Christian era, and stained glass, for ecclesiastical windows, in the seventh century.

The question is, Has not rhetorical congruity something to say respecting such expositions as these? The principle is an obvious one, that a certain rhetorical sympathy ought to blend a subject of thought with thought on that subject. The same principle should, if possible, blend a text and its explanation. An exposition should, if possible, be rhetorically a prolongation of the text; it should make the same impression; it should be on the same level of thought and feeling. Sustain, if possible, the key-note of inspiration.

"If possible," I say: sometimes it is not possible. Three exceptions deserve mention. One is when a text demands only a verbal exposition. The definition of a few words may be all that it needs to put its meaning fully before the hearer. There is no place for a rhetorical expansion of it in the explanation. Another exception occurs when the use to be made of the text in the body of the sermon does not demand the aid of the text. The body of the sermon may be an independent discussion. The text may be a motto only. Having introduced the subject, the sooner the text retires from the discussion, the better. A third exception

occurs when to sustain the rhetorical impression of the text would neutralize, in whole or in part, the design of the sermon. This may be the case, as we have seen, in the treatment of "promising texts." An imaginative text may contain a principle which you may wish to treat argumentatively. The Psalms are lyric poems: yet they contain themes of sermons which we do not wish to sing. The beginning of the fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah is an exhortation, "Ho, every one that thirsteth." But, in a discourse upon it, you may wish to elaborate the doctrine of an unlimited Atonement. In such cases your object requires that you should not prolong the rhetorical impression of the text. These exceptions, however, leave a large range for the principle, that, if possible, the explanation should be so conducted as to be in keeping with the rhetorical character of the text.

12th, An explanation should be so conducted as not to excite frivolity in an audience. Bishop Andrews, of the time of King James I. of England, took for the text of a Christmas sermon before the king the words, "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ." In his exposition occurs the following: "Seeing the text is of seasons, it would not be out of season itself; and, though it be never out of season to speak of Christ, yet even Christ hath his seasons. 'Your time is always,' saith he; 'but so is not mine. I have my seasons,' one of which seasons is this, the season of his birth, whereby all recapitulate in heaven and earth, which is the season of the text. So this is a text of the seasons." Perhaps you can make sense of this: I can not. One of the most useless modes of preaching is that which depends for the interest it excites upon

the risible sensibilities; and the most offensive species of this genus of sermons is that which degrades the Bible to the antics of rhetorical buffoonery. Three radical errors are involved in such preaching.

One is that it almost invariably does violence to the biblical idea of the language used. That is rarely a truthful interpretation of the Scriptures which excites laughter. Moreover, the kind of interest which biblical fun creates is hostile to the main end of preaching. Spiritual success in preaching depends quite as much on the kind as on the degree of the interest it awakens. The interest of mirth at the best, and in its legitimate uses, can perform only what may be called a menial service, so inferior is it relatively to the more noble workings of the pulpit. The instant that it gets above that menial rank, it becomes an encumbrance and an offense. A preacher who depends upon it as the charm of his pulpit has his own work to undo when he would reach the conscience of his people. He is like an unskillful oarsman, who retards his own speed by constant back-water, for the entertainment of making the spray dance in the sunbeams.

Moreover, the interest of mirth directly associated with biblical texts is especially hazardous to the popular reverence for the Scriptures. We may admit, that in one or two instances, like the narrative of Elijah's mockery of the priests of Baal, there are biblical texts, which with vivid painting, and from the lips of a good mimic, might excite the mirth of an audience with no violence to the inspired thought; but the admission is no acknowledgment of the expediency or the right to bring other passages into mirthful associations. Texts are injured by such uses. The interest of conviction, of reverence, of penitence, of love, ought never to be hazarded for the sake of the interest of mirth.

13th, An explanation should be such as to suggest a definite theory of inspiration. Homiletic exposition always involves some theory of inspiration. We can not, if we would, discuss the Bible as if the question of its inspiration were obsolete. Homiletic exposition must often disclose a preacher's theory of inspiration. If you do not define it in form, you must often express it by implication. When you do not express it, you will often hint at it. When you do not consciously hint at it, it will look out of the windows of your sermon, and show itself for what it is.

It is important to observe, therefore, that no indefinite theory of inspiration can live in the popular faith. The fact is a most significant one, that the popular mind never, to any considerable extent, enters into refined distinctions on this doctrine. It receives the doctrine in some strongly defined form, or in no form. Vagueness of teaching destroys the doctrine as effectually as flat denial. Exposition must assume it in a bold form. Undeveloped hints of it must suggest it in such form. If we claim that one text is authoritative, and another not, we must have a reason to give which will not seem to the common sense of hearers to fritter away from inspiration every thing that is clear, and every thing that is decisive.

Yet the pulpit may suggest ill-defined ideas of inspiration by expositions which are regardless of varieties of biblical style. You can not make biblical poetry dogmatic, or biblical argument imaginative, or biblical dogma figurative, or biblical history allegorical, or biblical allegory biographical, without teaching, by implication, ideas of inspiration which no man can so define as to save them from self-contradiction, and yet leave strong points to the popular faith in those ideas. To

the popular mind such interpretations will seem to make the Scriptures contradict all the laws by which thought expresses itself when uninspired.

14th, An explanation should be such as to suggest naturally the proposition of the sermon. Dr. Ross, a professor of theology in Glasgow in the seventeenth century, published a sermon on the text, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." He states his proposition as fourfold: 1. To describe the different parties which distract our divided Zion; 2. To show the malignancy of the sin of schism; 3. To show the necessity of Episcopacy for the support of the concerns of Christianity; 4. To apply *the subject*. "The subject" here seems vast enough; but how shall the gulf between it and the text be bridged? Prefatory remarks may introduce such a proposition; they may introduce any thing. But how, from the point of the text, shall we discover the proposition? The firmament to be explored by our homiletic telescope is immense.

Yet does not this extreme case illustrate a defect of which, in less degree, we are often sensible in listening to sermons, — that the gulf between the text and the proposition is not bridged in any natural and effective way? The text is explained, the subject is introduced; but neither is linked to the other. With the text in mind we listen to the proposition with surprise: with the proposition in mind we recall the text with surprise. Observe, then, that a good explanation will often show that the proposition is contained in the text. If not this, it will often show that the proposition is naturally suggested by the text. The pertinency of an accommodated text depends wholly upon the explanatory transition from text to theme. No matter how brief the transition: if it be such as to build a natural

bridge between text and theme, it is enough. A good explanation will often give to a subject the inspired authority of the text. This we observed as one of the uses of a text. The value of it often depends wholly on the exposition of the text. If it be so explained that it evidently indorses the subject, inspiration becomes responsible for the subject. The proposition may then be discussed as if it were itself inspired. This is the chief defense of topical sermons.

15th, In a topical sermon the explanation should, if possible, be such as to bring the text to bear directly upon the conclusion. It is often of great value to be able to use a text in the application of a sermon. To repeat it, to urge it home as containing the germ of all that has been said, even to show that text and sermon are in the same line of thought, and the application of one is therefore supported by the other, — this is often of great force in the conclusion. Occasionally the text forms the best possible closing sentence of a sermon. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve" may be the most forcible beginning and ending of a sermon on immediate repentance.

But I have said that this adjustment of explanation to conclusion is valuable when it is possible. Sometimes it is not possible; that is, it is not natural. The application of a discourse may flow more naturally from the body of the discussion than directly from the text. The applications may be divergent, not concentrated in one textual thought. A closing appeal may grow out of the last division of a sermon, and may be too remotely connected with the text to invite textual aid in its development. The expedient in question can not be forced. It must be the natural outgoing of the text as unfolded in the explanation, or it will fall flat.

16th, The explanation should be varied on different occasions. A very obvious hint is this when attention is called to it; but often attention is not given to it. Have no stereotyped method of exposition. Do not always philologize by verbal criticism. Do not always explain descriptively. Do not always tell of the author of the text, his character, his condition, his history. Do not always speak of his readers, who and what they were, and why he wrote to them. Do not always cite parallel passages, nor always paraphrase, nor always pass rhetorical criticism on the beauty, the force, the logic, of the text. No one of these varieties can be always becoming: no two, no three of them can generally be so. We must have variety, if we have fitness: then we gain a virtue in variety itself. Any thing will caricature itself in the course of time, if it never varies. "Paradise Lost" would become ludicrous, if we should never hear any thing else. Macbeth and Hamlet would become comedies, if we were doomed to hear them rehearsed once a week, as people listen to sermons. Boys in the street would mouth parodies of them Respect the dignity of a preacher of the gospel enough to protect it from burlesque in your own person.

V. We have now considered the qualities of the explanation. Another general topic demands a brief notice. It is the locality of the explanation relatively to other parts of a sermon. This will vary according to the character of the sermon. In an expository sermon explanation forms the body of the discourse. In a textual sermon the explanation may often be divided. Each clause of the text being a division of the sermon, each may be explained in the development of its own division. Not that this will necessarily be so; but often it will be the natural method to introduce each part of

the explanation in the place where it is wanted for immediate use.

In either a topical or a textual sermon the explanation may sometimes form an introductory division by itself. This will often be the natural method of explaining a very difficult text, or a text which is commonly misinterpreted, or a text which is severely contested. Take the text, "I could wish myself accursed from Christ." You wish to discourse from that text on the passion of love for the souls of men. This is precisely what the text expresses. Yet to evolve it clearly from the text requires time. It can not be well done in a brief, preliminary fragment of a sermon. Very well: let the first division of the sermon propose to explain the meaning of the text; this serves the double purpose of giving time, and of attracting an attention which your exposition might not receive as a preliminary. But in a topical sermon the explanation will, more frequently than otherwise, be a preliminary to the proposition. If an explanation is needed in a topical discourse, it will generally be brief, and, as we have seen, is a bridge from text to subject.

Which shall take the precedence, — the explanation, or the introduction proper, when both are needed, in a topical sermon? As we shall see, these are two things. Which precedes the other, — the remarks explanatory of the text, or other remarks introductory of the subject? I answer, No rule is practicable: follow the homiletic instinct. Sometimes this will give the precedence to one, sometimes to the other, and sometimes it will intermingle them. The question is one of the minutiæ of sermonizing, to which criticism can give no more definite answer than this without hampering homiletic freedom.

LECTURE XV.

EXCURSUS: THE BIBLE SERVICE.

THIS discussion of the subject of exposition suggests another topic, which does not necessarily belong to it as a subject of homiletic theory, but which excites considerable interest at present, and is naturally considered now in the form of an *excursus*. The question is specifically this, Does the biblical instruction of our churches require any change in the present usages of the New England pulpit in conducting the services of the Lord's Day?

I. To answer this question intelligently, we need to note, first, some facts respecting the state of things in which our present usages had their origin. One is, that, in the olden time, the two sermons on the Lord's Day, with the accompanying exercises, constituted the whole of the services of public worship. Sabbath-schools were not. The first Sabbath-school in this country is not yet seventy-five years old. Bible-classes were not common. I am not able to find evidence that they existed, to any general extent, before Sabbath-schools were instituted. Weekly lectures were not frequent, except the single lecture preparatory to the administration of the Lord's Supper. We are within bounds in saying, that, as a general rule, the services of public worship were limited to the Lord's Day and to the two preaching services of that day.

Another fact bearing upon the question is that biblical exposition was not common, except in the exercises of public worship. Nearly all the exposition of the Scriptures which the people received was from their pastors, and was given by them from their pulpits. The formal, religious instruction of children at home was confined mainly to two things, — the Westminster Catechism and the text of the Scriptures, both of which were committed to memory. Aged persons are still living who give evidence of this fact in their own religious culture.

The second Sabbath-school in Massachusetts was established by my father, at the suggestion of a Christian lady, in his parish at West Brookfield. It was done in opposition to the judgment of some of his most devout parishioners. They refused to countenance the innovation by the presence of their children. And he has told me that he and others who favored it had reflected so little on the subject, that they scarcely knew what to do with the children who did attend. At the first they could think of nothing appropriate to the Lord's Day, but the committal to memory of biblical passages, the Catechism, and Watts's Psalms and Hymns.

That state of things could not well have been different; for there were no popular commentaries. Christian parents had not the means of interpreting the Scriptures to their households without aid from the pulpit. "Doddridge's Family Expositor," published about a hundred and thirty years ago, was the first work of the kind in our language, and was not of great value for the discussion of the difficulties of the Bible; nor was the circulation of it at all general. Books were costly, and the country poor. The best biblical commentaries were in Latin, and of course accessible only

to the clergy. Rev. Albert Barnes once told me, that, when he began the preparation of his "Notes on the New Testament," the only books he could depend upon for his assistance were his lexicons, and a copy of the "Critici Sacri,"—a work in thirteen Latin folios, which formed the best part of his library. Yet that was not far from the year 1830. I give these details in evidence of the fact, that, from the necessity of the case, biblical exposition through all the early periods of New England history must have come from the clergy, and must have been a part of the work of the pulpit on the Sabbath.

It is in evidence, furthermore, that the exposition of the Scriptures in the early history of our churches was not neglected by the pulpit. The biblical learning of the clergy was, of course, variable. But among them were at all times to be found excellent Greek and Hebrew scholars. The proportion of those who had a working knowledge of the Hebrew language was at one time probably larger than at present. Many of the old manuscript sermons still found in the archives of our libraries are replete with exposition. So far as I am able to learn, the bulk of the ancient preaching of New England was not of a controversial or a dogmatic character. The majority of those discourses were practical discussions of Christian experience, hortatory appeals to the impenitent, sermons of biblical biography and incident, and expositions and textual discussions.

Another fact points in the same direction. The usage was almost universal of commenting on the passage of the Scriptures which was read as a preliminary to the "long prayer." Many of the early churches of New England would not tolerate the reading of the Bible in their pulpits without such comment. The

rehearsal of the Scriptures as the "lesson of the day," as practiced in the Church of England, and which has now become so common among us, our fathers resolutely discouraged and often denounced. They called it "dumb reading." As they would not "say prayers," but would pray, so they would not read the Scriptures after a manner which tempted them to indolent and listless worship. Whatever else they did, they would not mock God. That state of feeling led to a vast amount of exposition of the Bible outside of sermons.

II. It is very obvious that time has brought about a silent revolution in the relations of our pulpit to the work of explaining the word of God. The ancient usage of the two sermons on the Lord's Day remains, for the most part, without innovation; but that is nearly all that remains unchanged.

Specially should it be noted that biblical instruction has come to be very largely given by laymen. It has become a question for debate in Sabbath-school conventions, what duty and what privilege, if any, belong to the clergy in the working of the whole machinery of biblical teaching to the youth of their parishes. The practical connection of the pastor with the school is in the majority of cases nominal. Again: popular commentaries have greatly diminished the dependence of adult hearers upon the pulpit for their scriptural knowledge. It has become a much more laborious effort than it once was to preach expository discourses which will find listening ears. Exposition, if not more learned, must be more versatile and more spirited.

As a natural consequence of this state of things, exposition in our pulpits has suffered a very general and exhaustive decline. Coleridge pronounced it one of the silent revolutions by which learning had suffered

in England, that literature had to so large an extent "fallen off from the liberal professions." By a similar revolution, scriptural exposition has silently fallen off from the pulpit. Comparatively few expository sermons are preached. In some congregations they would subject a preacher's zeal to adverse criticism. Even textual sermons are not nearly so abundant as they were a century ago. The habit of comment on the passages of the Bible read for devotional uses has almost entirely ceased. Popular taste and clerical compliance have sacrificed this ancient and invaluable usage to the demand for brevity in public worship.

Meanwhile, what of the ancient double service of the pulpit on the Sabbath? It surely is not holding our audiences with sufficient force to prevent their questioning its usefulness. One of the modern "signs," as you very well know, indicative of the relations subsisting between the pulpit and the pew, is the query whether one service for preaching purposes is not better than two. However the question may be answered, it is a very pregnant matter to the pulpit that the question should ever have been asked. It indicates a flagging of Christian interest in the work of the pulpit as now conducted. Why is not the query raised, whether some other labor of the day is a necessity? Why do not thoughtful laymen ask whether the Sabbath-school should be suspended, or the evening conference meeting?

The people are sensible of monotony in the two sermons of the day, as they are not in attendance upon any other services of a crowded Sunday. By parting with expository preaching, the pulpit has parted with its most important aid and stimulus to variety. No other one thing gives to preaching so wide a range of

religious thought as the exposition of the Scriptures, when it comes forth as the fruit of a rich, full mind, — rich in scholarly resources, and full of intense practical aims.

This, in my view, explains why thinking and overtasked laymen are asking how the Lord's Day can be made less laborious. The two sermons, with their devotional accompaniments, are the only two things in the occupations of the day in which, as now generally conducted, the sense of monotony is unavoidable. The second sermon is often a treadmill in its impression of sameness. There is no evidence that the popular interest in preaching *as such* has declined. The largest regular audiences in the land are in churches. No such audiences could be assembled weekly anywhere else. But Sabbath engagements have multiplied, and other *stimuli* to religious thought have crowded within the popular reach, so that, to sustain the preaching at its established height of interest, a new inspiration of variety is indispensable. Under the circumstances, it is the most natural thing that church-going people should seek relief from overtasking by proposing to drop one of the only two services which appear to them to be substantially alike. We can not blame them for not being reverently fond of treadmills.

III. We may then safely answer the main question, so far at least as to say, that, in some form or other, we need to reinstate the biblical instruction of our churches and our youth in the pulpit, and in the hands of pastors. This, it seems to me, is the vital point to be carried. The fatal evil is that preaching should be isolated from the work of scriptural teaching. No preacher can afford to allow that work to fall off from his pulpit. An orator in the pulpit is a great man; but

no man is so great that he can afford to be nothing else than a pulpit orator. The evil thrusts with two edges. It cuts down the worth of the preaching, and it cuts down the worth of teaching as well.

On this last point, both pastors and laymen often need to be wiser than they are. Nothing in the Christian training of a people works as well as it might work, if it is not headed by the pulpit. Men talk more glibly than wisely of the superiority of laymen and of women in Christian work. The notion that on any large scale, and for long periods of time, we can put religious work under the leadership of either men or women who are doing any thing else than religious work is not philosophical. Nothing else of the kind in this world prospers under leadership which is not concentrated upon it, and concentrated in the hands of men. Yet the man who devotes his life to the far-reaching study and conduct of Christian labor becomes *de facto* a clergyman. Call him what you will, dress him as you please, put him where you choose, he is practically a minister of the gospel. Licensed or unlicensed, "in orders," or without orders, or in disorder, he is, to the people among whom he works, a man set apart from themselves. He is not doing their work, nor living their life. He is not "one of them" in any vital sense of the phrase. He is a professional worker for Christ as truly as the Archbishop of Canterbury.

We must not be misled by names in a matter of this sort; and let us not succumb to a senseless prejudice against a clerical exterior. Of some things, we must have the form, if we have the thing. If the leadership of Christian work creates for itself the equivalent of ministers, the fact only indicates that the leadership naturally belongs to ministers, as theoretically we

should suppose it would belong to them. If we do not create the men *for* the work, they will be created *by* the work. The work suffers, if it is deprived of such leadership. Decapitate the clergy to-day, and Christian work has only to give itself for a generation to creating another set of men to take their places. This principle, then, it is reasonable to apply to the work of biblical instruction. We must believe that you can not have that form of Christian labor in its best development, if usages are so framed as to exclude the ministry from the doing of it. They must lead it by actual participation in it, or it must degenerate in quality, whatever it may be in quantity.

If these views are correct, it follows that one of the most vital changes which our present system of Christian work needs is to reinstate in the pulpit the work of biblical teaching; not at all to diminish that work elsewhere; not at all to hamper its freedom anywhere; but to restore the leadership in it to the pulpit. I say "restore," because the pulpit once had that leadership; for it had the whole of the work. It did all that was done. It is no innovation to devise methods of setting the pulpit again at the head of all expedients, and of all training for the scriptural education of the people. It is strictly a restoration of a prerogative which has become partially, and in many cases wholly, obsolete. It is a restoration which I believe nine-tenths, if not even a larger proportion, of our thinking laymen would gladly welcome.

Depend upon it that you have a just and a generous constituency to deal with in this thing. In no development of working power in real life are the true *aristoi* sooner found out and appreciated and obeyed than in our complicated system of labor for the religious cul

ture of the people. Workers of every grade find their honest level here by a gravitation more unerring than that of a plumb-line. The planets are not truer to their orbits. If, among any people of average intelligence and good sense and piety, you do not find your place of *moral* supremacy, where you shine as the stars, it will be because you lack something which belongs to the luster of that supremacy. There is a vacuum or a soft spot in you somewhere. Scholarship, tact, industry, innate force, or the graces of the divine in-dwelling, something or other, which, by the nature of things, lies in the ground-work of success, is always wanting when a biblical preacher fails to grasp and to hold the moral leadership of all the agencies at work among an honest and sensible people for their Christian building and adornment.

IV. But how shall this re-instatement of biblical teaching in our pulpits be achieved? I answer, in view of what has been said, that some modification seems to be demanded in one of the two preaching services of the Sabbath as now sustained in our churches. Reconstruct one of these two services in such a way as shall bring the pulpit more obviously to the front in the work of biblical instruction. The question of expediency as affected by locality, by the public opinion of a church, by the character of a community, must, of course, be decided by the good sense of a pastor in each case as it arises.

The substitution of the Sabbath-school for the usual service of the afternoon is often, but by no means always, the best thing that is practicable. Yet this should never be done, unless it can be so arranged as to make the pastor active in the biblical work of the school. Whether he should be superintendent, or not,

is a minor matter. But the duties of the hour should be so planned as to give the pastor an opportunity, and lay upon him the necessity, of engaging personally and prominently in the scriptural teaching.

Then he should bring to that service the results of the best and latest biblical scholarship at his command He must have not so much the headship of position as the headship of work. No pastor can afford an idle Sabbath half-day as the rule of his ministry. Never make the Sunday-school, therefore, a labor-saving expedient for your pulpit. Change only the form and method of your labor. Prepare for it with scholarly fidelity as laboriously as for a written sermon. Seek to elevate and expand by the change the biblical culture of your people. If you can not do that, by all means let the present usage remain intact. Any change which only gives to you a silent afternoon thrusts you into the rear of the Christian workers of your parish. It drapes your pulpit in token of bereavement of its most sacred prerogative. But in some cases the substitution of the Sunday-school for the preaching service of the afternoon, under the guidance of a studious and quick-witted pastor, is working with unquestioned success. Pastor and people alike are rejuvenated by it.

In other cases the "Bible service," technically so called, can be substituted profitably for the usual sermon of the afternoon. If a pastor has the qualifications requisite for such a service, and if the people are convinced of its value, so that they co-operate heartily in sustaining it, it *is* valuable far beyond the present second sermon. The social pliability of it, the freedom of question and answer, the directness with which it may bring to expression the questionings which are alive in the hearts of the people render it in some cases the

most spiritual service of the day. Theoretically, at least, it looks very promising. It must be tested by time.

But there are diversities of gifts. Not every pastor can engineer well a Sabbath-school. Not every pastor can conduct a Bible service in a large assembly with Socratic wisdom. There are diversities also of parochial caliber and culture. Not every parish is superlatively wise. Not every parish is open to the innovations of a youthful pastor. Not every parish is co-operative with any pastor in infusing life into a public service. Very well: do not try to force your own nature or the inclinations of your people to distasteful experiments. Bend, rather, to your purpose the system now in vogue. Work into it an increase of expository and textual preaching. Seldom, if ever, preach two topical discussions in one day. Make one, at least, of your two discourses a distinctively and specially biblical one in material and form. Lay yourself out to swell the fund of biblical knowledge among your people. This is practicable to any pastor who will create the resources necessary for it in the culture of his own mind. It requires more than biblical learning. It requires a mental assimilation to the biblical atmosphere of thought. It requires a quick eye, a ready memory, and a nimble tongue. No man can succeed in it who does not love study, or who gives to biblical study the second place in the habits of his life, or who has not patience to train himself to fluent and versatile extemporaneous speech. But any man can make it a success who will give to it the same amount of enthusiasm and of toil which achieves success in other methods of preaching.

At the first there is no saving of labor; but when time has developed a preacher's skill in the selection

and working of biblical materials, and his command of extemporaneous utterance, there is a vast saving of labor, because of the accumulation of *available* materials. I mean a saving of labor relatively to the results achieved. It would be more accurate to say a more productive economy of labor. No other study is so prolific of the finest quality and variety of homiletic materials as the study of the Scriptures. No other materials work into the realities of human life and the emergencies of men's souls so deftly as the materials thus gained. Once full of them, and with a mind assimilated to their quality, with a speech which holds them at the tongue's end, a preacher need never exhaust himself. He need never rack his brain, or roam the streets, for something to say, and something to the point. The stream is perennial. It is the river of the water of life.

I do not speak on this subject without knowing whereof I affirm. You will pardon me if I give you — what you will bear me witness I do not often give in a formal way — a leaf from my own experience. I am not ashamed to say that I spent the larger part of the first night after my ordination in vigils of hopeless despair of ever being able to rise to the level of my pulpit. My sermons were — what they were. I knew it, if nobody else did. The first gleam of confidence that I gained arose from the kindness with which my very indulgent people received my expository remarks in conference meetings, for which I prepared myself as regularly as for the services of the Sabbath.

Led, as I believe, by the Spirit of God, I took up the Prophecy of Isaiah and the Epistle to the Romans as subjects of thorough study. I devoted to them from one to two hours daily, using the best helps at my

command. The first money I earned for my library was spent for books of sacred literature. Wisely or unwisely I made much of Monday mornings in building the biblical foundations of my ministry. The first tangible result was that I very soon found the materials of sermons thronging upon me from those two books of the Bible. I found unique texts for textual sermons, compact and prolific paragraphs for expository sermons, philosophical combinations of inspired thought which nothing else would have suggested to me, novel relations of Scripture to Scripture, discoveries of the secret harmonies of revelation, adjustments of truth to popular wants which I could have met in no other way, illustrations from books of Eastern travel, and, more than all else, an uplifting of my own mind into a biblical atmosphere, specially an atmosphere of faith in God and in this world's future. Then followed a repose of conscience in my labor which was entirely new to me.

Before four months had passed away I began to use the results of my scriptural studies in my pulpit. On every Sabbath afternoon, if I preached twice to my own people, I delivered extemporaneously, though from a full brief, a textual or an expository sermon on a passage selected from one of those two books which were the subjects of my daily research. The sermon was prepared always on Saturday; but the texts and materials were ready to my hand weeks in advance. After the first four months of my ministry I never spent a quarter of an hour hunting for a text or a theme. That course of biblical sermons, with a parallel course of doctrinal discussions, constituted the staple of my preaching; and at the end of my pastorate of six years I had not exhausted those two books of the Scriptures,

and had traversed less than one-third of a system of doctrinal theology.

My success was not brilliant, but I am confident that my biblical course saved my pulpit. Those scriptural sermons brought me near to the best Christian experience of my most godly hearers. They diversified and simplified my preaching, and expanded and deepened my range of thought in all the labors of my pulpit. They assisted me greatly in extemporaneous prayer. Inferior as those discourses seem to me now, and though I have no idea that they did as much good to any one else as to the preacher, yet I am sure that nothing else of which I was master could have held for me the confidence of my people in my ability to be their spiritual teacher. The work of those years is yet to be tried as by fire; but, if any thing in it shall bear the test by that purest of the elements, it will be found in that part of the work in which I went before my hearers with the most elaborate and yet the simplest results of my study of the word of God.

I speak the less unwillingly to you of that chapter of my life, because there was nothing in my experiment which was the fruit of genius, or in any way exceptional. In kind it was a success which any one of you may achieve, I hope in much greater degree. I beg you to try the experiment for yourselves. Supply your libraries at the outset with the best works in biblical literature. Do not spare your purses in so doing. Wear the old coat, and buy the new book. Incur any hazard or hardship, but those of debt or dishonor, to get your outfit of tools to work with. You must have them early in your ministry, if you are ever to use them. Your wedding can wait, but your library can not. Then systematize your biblical studies, and give your-

self to them religiously. Let the garden go unweeded, and let the potatoes rot in the ground. Get rid of church councils, and building committees, and executive miscellanies, so far as you honorably can. Leave the social dinners, and the pleasure-parties, and the regattas, and the operas, and the fast horses, to those who need them. Say you, with Nehemiah, to the messengers who tempt you to such things, "I am doing a great work, so that I can not come down: why should the work cease whilst I leave it and come down to you?" Cultivate a stern unity of purpose in your calling of God, and hold to it to the death. Come thus to your biblical sermons with a full mind which aches to deliver itself. Get yourself into a *state* of biblical production in which your materials for the pulpit shall always crowd *you*, you never hunting *them*.

Keep your pulpit thus in advance of your people in reverent knowledge of the word of God, and you may rest assured that the question of the double service on the Sabbath will settle itself, so far as your power to provide for it is concerned. You will at the same time have the leadership of your people in biblical instruction, without asking for it. The pulpit has only to take its own place, and sustain itself ably there, to have its biblical leadership acknowledged as its natural right. The growth of such a ministry in spiritual power is like the "path of the just."

LECTURE XVI.

THE INTRODUCTION: THEORY, SPECIFIC OBJECTS.

THE subject to which we now proceed in the further discussion of the constituent parts of a sermon is the introduction.

I. The theory of the introduction: what is it? In reply it should be observed as a preliminary, that not all that precedes the announcement of the subject is necessarily introductory. In exact definition we must distinguish between preliminaries in general and the introduction proper. For example, the exposition of a text is not necessarily introductory of the theme. It may take the place of an introduction; it may render an introduction proper unnecessary; but in itself it is distinct. An introduction might exist without a text: an exposition could not. An exposition might exist without a subject: an introduction could not. An introduction is a specific process, which resembles no other in the composition of a discourse.

1st, The theory of the introduction relates primarily to the mental state of the audience respecting the subject of discourse. There is my audience, here is my subject: how to bring the two together is the practical question. Every public speaker of much experience feels it to be a question, often, of great moment to his success. All good definitions of an introduction agree

in this, that its characteristic idea is that of preparation of the minds of the hearers. To secure to the audience a natural approach to the subject and to its discussion — this is the aim. No matter how this is secured, the process is the introduction. If you gain it without words, you have an introduction without words. This answers the inquiry, whether the introduction is always necessary in a sermon. Some reply No, and think that their experience justifies them, because they sometimes "dump" a subject upon an audience, without prefatory remarks, yet apparently without loss of power. But let us not dispute about words. Every speaker's instinct teaches him the necessity of gradation in the progress of thought. His own mind has come to his theme by gradation: the minds of his hearers must do the same. With no rule on the subject, a speaker of prompt oratorical intuitions will feel this necessity of his hearers, and will adjust himself to it as best he can. Certain equivalents for an introduction exist, which may enable a preacher to dispense with the form of it in words; but it is because the preparative process is otherwise accomplished. That such a process is a necessity lies in the nature of discourse. To omit it would be scarcely less unnatural than day without a dawn, and night without twilight. Nature never wins us by startling and convulsive changes. These excite only our fears. Even brute mind distrusts nature in an earthquake. Gradation is the law in all agreeable mental processes.

This view of the general theory of an introduction suggests further that this part of a sermon is susceptible of fine rhetorical quality. Why, in announcing to a mother the death of her only child, would you select your messenger with care? Anybody can blurt

out the fact that a child is dead. The hangman might do that. But you desire a thoughtful announcement, a delicate announcement, a humane, sympathetic announcement. The same principle holds in regard to introduction of discourse. In it the rarest qualities of thought and style are practicable. It admits, often, of rare originality of thought. The best method of approach to a theme is often a discovery or an invention. The author deserves a patent for it. It admits, frequently, of condensed logic in its structure. Tact in hints of argument is often as necessary here as in the proof of a proposition. It admits of great beauty of illustration, and of finish in diction. The utmost delicacy of execution may be practicable and needful. Some subjects from some audiences can not get a hearing otherwise. When the prophet Nathan, at the risk of his life, sought to bring King David to repentance, his introduction cost him more thought than all that came after it. An accomplished preacher will disclose his trained mind and practiced pen as clearly in this as in any other part of a sermon. An introduction may be as beautiful as the morning; and it may be like Milton's chaos.

2d, The theory of the introduction involves a certain relation to the mental state of the speaker. Preparation of the audience is needful — for what? For a subject alone? Not so. A speaker's opinion on the subject may contain some unexpected peculiarities for which the audience may need to be prepared. The speaker's opinions, with all that renders them momentous to his own mind, are what is to be floated over from his mind to the minds of his hearers; and very much may depend on a smooth and rapid launch. But is this all? Possibly not Preparation of the audience

may be needful for peculiarities in a speaker's methods of discussion. The subject and the results being given, a process lies between them which may demand preparatory forethought to enable hearers to follow and to accept it. Your method of argument, your style of illustration, omissions which you purpose may require prefatory remark to put your audience in the way of your line of thought.

Again: preparation is always needed to secure the sympathy of an audience with the effect of a subject upon a speaker's own heart. The work is but half completed if preparation is made for only intellectual results. You are not only in possession of your subject, but your subject has possession of you. You feel it: you are under the moral dominion of it: you represent in your own person the effects of the sermon you are about to preach. A vital object of preaching, therefore, is to lift the audience up to the same level of sensibility on which the preacher stands. Profound sympathies are never spontaneous. They start in preliminary emotions. A magnetic line may sometimes be laid down between the pulpit and the pew in the first five minutes of the delivery of a sermon, which shall vibrate with electric responses all the way through.

3d, We may, therefore, sum up these elements of the general theory of the introduction in the following definition; namely, that an introduction is that part of a discourse which is designed to prepare an audience for agreement in opinion, and for sympathy in feeling with the preacher on the subject of discourse. Two inferences from the views here presented deserve notice

(1) It is obvious that explanatory remarks on the text will often be an equivalent for an introduction Some subjects once evolved from forcible texts, and

thus carrying inspired authority on the face of them, will speak for themselves, and speak for the preacher, so eloquently that he has only to pass on, without a word of purely introductory remark.

(2) When explanatory and introductory remarks are intermingled in a sermon, this should be done intelligently. The most meaningless, and therefore forceless introductions are made up of heterogeneous materials, which, probably, the preacher does not clearly recognize as one thing or another. When you are sensible of such homiletic vertigo, stop; let the brain clear itself; start anew, with clear insight into your bearings.

II. The theory of the introduction is always the same, but it has specific objects which are variable. What are these specific objects? Cicero says that the specific objects of the exordium are "*reddere auditores benevolos, attentos, dociles.*" This statement is comprehensive, yet compact. I can not improve it. Seldom can any one improve a rhetorical statement by Cicero. He was that rarest combination of rhetorical powers, a prince of orators and a prince of critics.

1st, It may be the specific object of an introduction to secure the good-will of an audience towards the preacher, — "*reddere auditores benevolos.*" Power over the majority of men is largely the power of person. Even physical presence is an important factor in the creation of influence with the popular mind. Men of large frame and erect carriage have the advantage over diminutive men in competitive labors. We unconsciously admit this by the very language in which we describe the large men. We talk of their "*commanding* presence." An instinct within us speaks in that phrase, — the instinct of obedience to a superior. Edward Everett used to lament that he could not

add four inches to his stature. In ancient times the Psalmist tells us that a man was famous "according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees." It is commonly mentioned as an anomaly which excites surprise, that Alexander the Great and Napoleon the First were small men.

Mental and moral qualities are more vitally represented in the influence of person. Do not the words of some men carry weight which you do not discover in their sentiments? The weight is in the men. Let an honest man honestly believe himself to be uttering an original truth, for the want of which the world is suffering, and, though you may find it in Æsop's Fables, yet the chance is that the world will ask with a sneer, "Who is Æsop?" and will believe in the man who is living to believe in himself. This power of person is no peculiarity of influence with the uncultivated. We all illustrate it in our own experience as listeners. Do we not all feel the force of a good elocution? Men of culture may be more quick than others to discover a cheat under the imposing exterior; but the imposing exterior carries weight with them as with others.

The ancient orators cultivated studiously this power of person in the exordiums of their orations, and in their preliminary discipline for public speech. The ancient taste seems not to have been offended, but attracted, rather, by a freedom of personal allusion which was often childlike. The ancient usage is no model for a modern preacher; but it illustrates the deference which the great orators of antiquity paid to the subtle magnetism of good-will between the hearer and speaker. Edmund Burke would have been pronounced by the cautious and painstaking orators of the ancient world a fool for his recklessness of all expedi-

ents of conciliation in the introductions of many of his parliamentary speeches. He aggravated hostility by defying it. He often produced it by inviting it. He gave occasion for it by assuming its existence, and answering it in kind. On one occasion he said, "Mr. Speaker, I rise under some embarrassment occasioned by a feeling of delicacy towards one half of the house and of sovereign contempt for the other half." Cicero would have pronounced him a savage.

This power of person with an audience is a legitimate object of homiletic culture. Why not? That is a false sentiment which prompts a man to say, "I will speak the truth, no matter what men think of me." Something of their respect for truth depends on what men think of you. Such is the divine ordinance of the ministry, that truth is never so powerful that it can afford to part with that alliance with the man appointed to proclaim it. No wise preacher, therefore, will defy a prejudice against himself among his hearers, or invite indifference to himself, by his neglect of any thing which forethought and self-discipline can add to his power of person.

Applying these principles to the subject of homiletic introductions, it should be further observed that a preacher seldom needs to construct introductions made up of fragments of his personal history. This ancient expedient, with rare exceptions, would be an offense in the modern pulpit. The general habit of the pulpit respecting things personal to the preacher must be that of silence. He needs the power of person which personal introductions are aimed at; no man needs it more: but he has certain advantages for gaining it which lie back of the pulpit. His personal character is known to his hearers: it may be presumed to be

favorably known. His reputation for intellectual ability speaks for him. His known history as a man of culture, as an *alumnus* of literary institutions, speaks for him. His reputation for piety precedes and introduces every sermon that he utters. Fortunately for every individual of the clerical order, the order as a whole has an accumulated history of qualities which commends it to the respect of men. That history is a common fund from which each one may draw, for his own use, of the power of person, till he does something which proves him unworthy of it. A preacher's chief cultivation of the power of person must be outside of the pulpit. In his home, in the homes of his people, in his study, in his closet, he must build up, in part unconsciously, the reputation on which the power of the man must rest.

Yet it should be remarked that every preacher must meet some occasions on which the introductions of his discourses should be devoted to the work of gaining the influence of person. He may be called to preach to an audience which he knows to be prejudiced against him. He may preach to another which is sublimely indifferent to him. Every preacher, even in the most retired and staid parish, will find that there are some subjects in regard to which, if he would speak, he must undo a personal prejudice, or remove a suspicion, or break up indifference, of which he is the object. He can be heard genially, it may be, on all subjects but one: on that he must charm wisely, if he would get a hearing which shall promise success.

That was not a wise man, who, in the time of the civil war, in a South-western State commenced a sermon by laying a revolver on the pulpit by the side of the Bible, saying that his life had been threatened, and

that he was prepared to defend it, as he would against a mad dog. A humble Massachusetts chaplain was his superior in homiletic tact, who was compelled by Gen. Butler to preach to a wealthy Presbyterian congregation of rebels in Norfolk, who were also in their seats on the Sabbath morning, in obedience to military order. Said the preacher, in commencing his discourse, "My friends, I am here by no choice of mine. I came to your city as a chaplain, to look after the souls of my neighbors who are here, as I am, under military rule. I stand in the place of your honored pastor by command of my military superior; but I am a preacher of the same Christ whom you possess, and I ask you to hear me for his sake." He had a respectful hearing for the next three months.

You can not foresee in what forms the need of such exordiums will arise; but every preacher in a long ministry must meet them, and his success must depend largely on his habit of estimating fairly, and cultivating in a manly way, the influence of person.

2d, The second specific object of the introduction may be to stimulate the attention of hearers, — "*reddere auditores attentos.*" Generally this is the chief object of the introduction: oftener than otherwise, it is the only object.

(1) Preachers labor under disadvantages in seeking the attention of an audience. The frequency of preaching is a disadvantage. No other public speakers speak so much as preachers do. The unchangeableness of their audiences is a disadvantage. It tempts both hearer and preacher to listlessness. The pulpit and the lyceum are sometimes contrasted in respect to the popular interest. You might as well compare vegetation with a cyclone. Nobody notices the one: every

body is agape at the other. A lecturer spending six months of the year on one lecture, and delivering it to one hundred and fifty different audiences during the other six, is no model either of labor or of success to a pastor. Again: popular satiety with the subjects of preaching is a disadvantage to the pulpit. The great themes of the pulpit are well-known themes. The most necessary themes are those on which a Christian community has the most perfect knowledge. We must not ignore these themes; yet we must recognize the satiety of the people, and must count the cost of meeting it. Further: the indifference arising from the depravity of hearers is a disadvantage to the pulpit. The hostility of sin is less to be feared than the indifference of sin. There is always hope of an audience which can be aroused into a contest with truth. Dr. Johnson complained that one of his books was not attacked by adverse criticism. It is not the "hot water" of our parishes which we have reason to fear: it is the lead.

The pulpit needs to understand, and tacitly concede, its disadvantage as a competitor with other departments of public speech for the interest of the popular mind. The disadvantages are such, that competition is unreasonable. No intelligent critic will ask it of the pulpit: no wise preacher will attempt it. If he does, he ends inevitably by preaching clap-trap. Still the pulpit in its legitimate sphere may do much to commend itself to the popular attention; and this may be done, in part, by skillful introductions.

(2) Therefore an introduction should avail itself of the natural curiosity which hearers feel in the beginning of a discourse, because it is the beginning. The fact that it is the beginning pricks the ears. The first sentence of a sermon and the last are always interesting. That

preacher must have an ancient and sublime reputation for dullness whose hearers look out of the window when he begins to speak. It is wisdom, therefore, to assume the existence of the interest of curiosity, and to use it. It is always a safe principle to begin with an audience where they are. Do not go behind or below them in search of them. Assume, therefore, the interest of curiosity: fall in with it trustingly. Never tug at an introduction as a thing intrinsically spiritless because it is a preliminary. Never distrust its power to interest. Treat boldly the waiting eyes and ears before you.

(3) Again: the introduction should direct interest to the subject in hand. Assuming that an interest exists, give it an object. The bees are swarming: give them something to swarm upon. That object must, of course, be your subject of discussion. Chrysostom used often to announce the subject of his discourse on the Sunday preceding its delivery. His object was to pre-occupy the minds of his hearers with that subject, and that only. Whatever may be said of such an expedient, it gives a valuable hint. The introduction should guide the interest of the hearer in the right groove, to the right end. Therefore a series of disconnected remarks can not form an introduction. Such a series may be interesting. It may be original. It may sparkle with scintillations of genius. Thought, metaphor, antithesis, apothegm, every element of material and form which can fascinate a hearer, may be in it; but, for the want of coherence and aim, it is not an introduction. It leads nowhere: it ushers in nothing. Such prefaces are gay but meaningless arabesques. Furthermore: a preface which creates an independent interest of its own is no introduction. An introduction is a tributary. For the subject, and for that only, it exists. Therefore it is a

defect in an introduction, if it excites an interest which is confined to itself. This is sometimes the radical fault of initiatory remarks, — they introduce nothing. They are interesting; they are connected; they are discourses in miniature: but they transfer nothing to the subject in hand.

Again: a preface, which, though aimed at the subject in hand, does not reach it squarely, is a defective introduction. Such prefaces there are, of which criticism can not say that they are disconnected, or that they are independent structures, but only that they do not come fairly and fully up to the theme in hand. They fall short of it, or on one side of it, or strike beyond it. They do not hit the target in the eye.

(4) Therefore it should be further observed that an introduction should lead the interest of hearers to the subject in a natural way. Did you never listen to the announcement of a proposition which started the inquiry in your mind, "How did the preacher come at it?" Something is faulty in the exordium which leaves honest room for that inquiry. Every subject has certain natural avenues of approach. You can not search them out by more circuitous passages without loss. Our minds are not lawless in this respect. We can not help getting chilled in a North-west passage round the world. We choose, rather, the international pathway of commerce. That introduction is misnamed, which is only a literary adventure from text to theme.

(5) Again: an introduction should sometimes direct the interest of hearers to the details of the discussion. Texts will often suggest to hearers methods of discussion which the sermons upon them do not realize. Yet it may cool the interest of some hearers, if you allow them to anticipate one kind of discussion, and give

them another. Sometimes a text surpasses a discussion in solemnity, and the introduction must be adroitly constructed so as to carry over the interest of the audience from such a text to such an inferior discussion without loss. Theodore Parker once chose for his text the words, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." It was soon after a presidential election, and the body of the sermon was devoted to a discussion of the prospects of democracy in this country. The introduction ought surely to have given the hearer some warning of such a leap as that. A superior sermon may not appear superior to a hearer who is disappointed in his expectations.

3d, The third specific object of an introduction may be to dispose hearers to receive favorably the sentiments of a sermon, — "*reddere auditores dociles.*" Men are often interested when not convinced, nor even predisposed to conviction. Theirs may be an interest of antipathy. The most attentive listeners to Dr. Lyman Beecher and to Dr. Griffin in Boston were Unitarians. The most deeply entranced hearers of Whitefield were men who came with stones in their pockets to assault him.

This suggests that the pulpit labors under a disadvantage growing out of the repulsiveness of many truths to the popular heart. We have before observed the indifference of depravity: its hostility is also a great disadvantage. The pulpit has large scope for sanctified tact in interesting unregenerate men in truth without awakening their latent enmity. If to awaken that is evidence of power, to win it over is evidence of conquest. In evading or conquering the hostility of hearers, much depends on securing the favor of an audience to the person of a speaker. If the man wins us, he will the more probably sway us.

Much depends on suppressing, by the introduction, the consciousness of difference of opinion between preacher and hearer. A French critic says that "eloquence consists in saying every thing without getting into the Bastille, in a country where you are forbidden to say any thing." Every hearer who dissents from you has a Bastille open for you in his own mind. Once get your thought lodged there, and no "reign of terror" can set it loose again. The early abolitionists, under the lead of Mr. Garrison, attempted to circulate a pamphlet which bore the title "The American Church a Brotherhood of Thieves." Was that a wise way to approach opponents? Yet some preachers have as rare a talent as that title displayed for a belligerent introduction of truth. There is a class of men whose chief impression in the pulpit and out of it is that of belligerents. If a subject of discourse can be approached in a militant way, they are sure to find that way. If there can be two opinions upon it, they are sure to advance one mainly as a shot at the other. If the audience can be supposed to contain opposers of a truth, such preachers instinctively present that truth as if it were a loaded musket. Unconsciously and blandly they fire at men in smiling ignorance of any other way of approach to them in public speech.

This belligerence of habit is the secret of a great deal of preaching at imaginary opponents. In many sermons we build our own cob-houses, and beat them down, and that is all. Nobody in the audience is hit. Yet that is a very effective way of creating a temporary opposition. Men will bristle up in self-defense, if we approach them bristling. Such an approach in preaching is as profound an error rhetorically as it is morally An exordium should, if possible, discover common ground

between hearer and preacher. Always start on the common ground, even if truth compels you to leave it. It is not necessary to obtrude into the foreground the obnoxiousness of truth to a depraved heart.

A profound principle of rhetorical skill is involved in the apostolic injunction that the servant of the Lord should be "apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves." St. Paul himself exhibited a rare example of this rhetorical skill in his address to the Athenians. We are told that his "spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry." A hot-brained, belligerent apostle of a new faith would have blazed out in a fury of denunciation. A man of fanatical conscience, in which there is always an element of malign emotion, would have talked of a "brotherhood of thieves." But St. Paul was too wise a man for that. "I perceive," he says in substance, "that in all things ye are much disposed to the worship of the gods. Among your countless altars I find one to the unknown God: Him declare I unto you." This was a most beautiful model of an eloquent introduction.

In an introduction much often depends on an appeal to recognized authorities. A genial atmosphere is made to envelop a subject, if a preacher approaches it by the aid of authorities which the hearers trust, and which lend to it dignity. Here lies much of the force of biblical references in an exordium. What are such allusions, but appeals to an authority which the hearers acknowledge? In this, also, consists the pertinence of quoting a popular proverb in an introduction. Proverbs are the concentrated wisdom of common sense. The voices of ages are given in them in reduplicated echo. The world recognizes them as an authority

Indirectly, but often perceptibly, they win acceptance for a truth which might not otherwise obtain a hearing.

Much depends, also, upon a temperate expression of truth in the introduction. Extremes of opinion are not winning anywhere: least of all are they so in an exordium. Impassioned utterances which are natural elsewhere will seem to be extremes here. They need to be approached by gradations of interest. Varied statement, proof, illustration, all natural arts of style may be necessary as preparatives for the utterance of ultimate views of truth. Begin the discussion of bold opinions as the new moon begins, — with a crescent expression only. Leave time for their fullness to grow upon the perceptions of an audience. We all love to be approached with moderation. Paradoxical men are not winning men. The world entertains an extravagant estimate of those whom it calls "safe men." It is astonishing what weakness, what folly, what commonplace will be endured in a public man, if he is only a "safe man." Wise-acres are the most comfortable of men: only a keen and irreverent minority find them out.

Occasionally the aim of an introduction must be to transform an existing hostility to the sentiments of a discourse. The occasions for this are not numerous, but no preacher is free from liability to them. Some of the most notable triumphs of the pulpit have consisted in producing revulsions of popular feeling and in actually using the hostility of an audience as a tributary to the conquest of their hearts. This is not so impossible as it seems. A preacher in such an emergency is assisted by the tendency of excited feeling to produce its opposite. Laughter and tears often succeed each other rapidly in an agitated assembly.

This principle comes into play with peculiar force in aid of a preacher. Conscience, in men who are raging with bitterness towards truth, is always silently struggling against them. The spring is strained against its nature, and its nature is to seek compensation from the opposite extreme. Sudden conversions sometimes illustrate this, and are explained by it. Some of Whitefield's astonishing conquests of hostile audiences are explained, in part, on the same principle. The most marvelous evidences of Whitefield's power appeared often in the fact of his getting a hearing. He was the prince of preachers to mobs. He chose popular gatherings at criminal executions as favorable opportunities for preaching. In Wales he once came to Hampton Common, and found twelve thousand people assembled to witness an execution. A more brutalized audience could scarcely be found in a Christian country. Who could hope to win them to a favorable hearing of the gospel? Yet to Whitefield they furnished one of his great opportunities.

The expedients of a prepossessing introduction are, oftener than otherwise, adopted by an oratorical instinct. In listening to criticisms respecting them, like this which I have attempted, the response is not unnatural that they are cognizable by criticism only; that practically no one thinks of them in the construction of so brief a preliminary as an exordium. I must admit that this is, in part, true. Preachers who adopt these expedients successfully are apt to do so without premeditation. They do it in the exercise of the oratorical instinct. The power to work such expedients well is gained chiefly by the cultivation of that instinct.

LECTURE XVII.

THE INTRODUCTION: SIMPLICITY, UNITY, DIRECTNESS, CONGRUITY.

III. THE specific objects of an introduction which have been considered suggest, further, the inquiry, What are the most important characteristics of a good introduction?

1st, Of these, the first in order and the first in importance is simplicity. Remember the mental state of an audience at the beginning of an address. They are unexcited. They are at leisure to criticise. They are waiting in suspense. Now, if ever, what is done should seem to be naturally done. Ease should pervade the whole movement. It may be elaborate, yet should never appear so. It may be original, novel, striking; yet, when uttered, it should seem the most natural thing to say.

(1) Simplicity in the introduction is obviously sacrificed by abstruse trains of thought. Abstruseness is relative. That which is abstruse to one audience may not be so to another. That which would not appear abstruse in the heat of the argument, supported before and after by a chain of reasonings, and to the level of which the hearer has been lifted by a gradation of remark, may be too obviously elaborate for the introduction. But the exclusion of abstruse thought does not

exclude profound thought from the exordium. Very much profound thought lies so near the surface even of the popular experience, that it is always within reach of the popular consciousness. It needs only to be stated in simple diction to be recognized and approved. The most profound truths of all real philosophy are of this character. The most philosophical aspects of religious truth are those which the popular mind instantly lays hold of when they are clearly stated. Power of sudden recognition of profound truth is no peculiarity of educated mind. It is a property of mind as mind. Deep calleth unto deep of such treasure in every soul. Such material, therefore, does not exclude simplicity from introductions, if a preacher will only be content with simple forms of statement. Let alone a philosophical dialect; seize such thought in its natural approaches to the popular speech, and be sure that the popular mind will greet it with a welcome.

(2) Simplicity of introduction is sacrificed by prolonged argumentation. Vinet mentions a sermon by Bourdaloue, which contained in the exordium the plans of three or four additional discourses. That could not possibly have been a good introduction. Lay no severe tax here on the memory of the hearer. Never seem to drag an audience up to the subject by main force. Therefore never seem to climb up to it yourself, as the railway car climbs Mount Washington, by dint of iron chains, and clamps, and cogs. If they break, what becomes of you?

(3) Simplicity of introduction may be sacrificed by the utterance of impassioned feeling. In the order of time, thought takes precedence of emotion, not emotion of thought. You must kindle the fire before you can use it. Therefore, as a rule, direct appeals are unsea-

sonable in an introduction. A direct appeal is an expression of feeling addressed to feeling. It presupposes emotive excitement on both sides. If thrust into an introduction, it involves a waste of sensibility. Dr. Nettleton was one of the most economical of preachers in his use of the hearer's emotions in the early part of his sermons. He has been known to stay away from the pulpit till after the hour of service, so that the audience might become expectant and impatient. Then, when he did begin, he was often lifeless; he hesitated; he drawled; he uttered truisms, so that he might get the advantage of the contrast when he roused himself to preach. These are artifices. In the pulpit they are affectations. But they illustrate the extreme of a sound principle. It is that of reserving the sensibilities of an audience till a place is reached in the sermon at which an appeal to them will be timely, because of the accumulated force of thought behind.

(4) To this general principle adverse to impassioned introductions, there are some exceptions. Reverting to the mental state of an audience as the test, we derive the rule, Begin on a level with the hearers in point of sensibility. If events have lifted their level of feeling, it will not do to ignore that uplifting: therefore sermons on exciting occasions sometimes demand excited exordiums. Sermons at the height of a religious awakening may admit of hortatory introductions. Sermons by a preacher whose illustrious reputation has preceded him, and has raised great expectations, may admit of such introductions. Sermons before large audiences may admit of the same, when before a meager assembly they would be frigid. Numbers create sensibility. The juxtaposition of a multitude is like the juxtaposition of burning coals. Therefore an excited

exordium before such an audience may be only on a level with their mood of feeling.

(5) An impassioned introduction should not be mistaken for an abrupt beginning without an introduction. The exordium of Cicero's first Oration against Catiline is often adduced as a case of impassioned exordium. It is not that: it is only an abrupt beginning without exordium. Not one word of that renowned invective is fitted or designed to prepare the audience for the subject of the coming discussion. On the contrary, the art of the orator consists in an explosion of his wrath upon the traitor, without forewarning either to him or to the assembly. He vaults into the subject by the spring of his anger. He flings it at the hearers as if by a catapult. The audience are trembling with passionate expectations. To begin at such a crisis with a calm and gradual ascent to the subject in hand would be like prefixing a classic exordium to the cry of "Fire!" In like manner, though rarely, a preacher is so pressed by exciting circumstances, that the question is not whether a cool or an impassioned introduction shall be chosen, but whether he shall have any introduction.

(6) One form of hortatory exordium deserves to be named as a more frequent exception than any other. It is that of asking for the devout attention of hearers. "Hear ye the word of the Lord" is the opening appeal of some of Isaiah's prophetic discourses. Our Saviour called the multitude, and said, "Hear and understand." St. Stephen, in his dying address to the mob, begins by saying, "Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken." So, at the present day, an earnest and brief, by all means brief, request that hearers will give you a prayerful attention may be in keeping with their mood.

(7) Simplicity of introduction is further sacrificed by

an obviously elaborate style. I say "obviously elaborate," because style may often be, must often be, the result of labor, when it has not, and ought not to have, the appearance of labor. Cicero says, "We must not depart from the familiar sense of words, lest our discourse *appear to be* prepared with too much labor."

For example, a succession of inverted sentences, a string of antitheses, a series of laconics, a protracted metaphor, studied changes of metaphor, elaborate involutions of style, an unusual vocabulary are features of a style too labored for an introduction. The difficulty with such a style is that it attracts attention to itself. Its rhetorical character, not what it expresses, the form, not the thing, allures attention. To be consciously allured, even by an excellence in style, to the rhetorical quality of it is an evil. Dr. Whately says that if an absolutely perfect orator could ever have existed, his hearers would not at the time have discovered that he was such. That discovery would have been an after-thought. Eloquence is necessarily unperceived as such. Its presence is invisible; its tread, inaudible.

To illustrate one form of this defect in introductory style, I quote from a sermon by Dr. Barrow, on "the profitableness of godliness." The preacher starts off in the following canter: "How generally men, with most unanimous consent, are devoted to profit, as to the immediate scope of their designs and aim of their doings, if with the slightest attention we view what is acted on this theater of human affairs, we can not but discern." This style is a fair imitation of the gait of a cantering nag. It is clumsy style anywhere, but imagine it as an opening sentence! Fancy the delivery of it! Who could escape with it the clerical humdrum?

We can readily believe the fact stated in the biography of Dr. Barrow, that he composed many of his discourses with no intention of preaching them.

2d, The second characteristic of a good introduction is unity.

(1) Unity of introduction includes all that is essential to oneness of impression. Certain ancient homiletic writers recognized three divisions in this part of a discourse: 1. The *exordium generale*, which was an introduction to the text; 2. The *exordium speciale*, which was a transition from the text to the subject; 3. The *exordium specialissimum*, which was an introduction following the proposition, and preparatory to the discussion. This is a fair symbol of many introductions in the practice of the modern pulpit. They are loose, disjointed, digressive, exhaustive. They are constructed on the principle of saying all that can be said. They make rubbish for the sake of clearing it away. A true exordium is always an aim and a shot. No part of a discourse should be more intensely one in its impression.

(2) Unity does not exclude from the exordium diversity of material. You may wish to dignify your subject, and yet to remove a prejudice, and, again, to explain a peculiarity in your method of discussion. Very well: these are pertinent materials for the introduction. But where is the point of unity? I answer, In the subject. All these objects of your introduction point inward to that. They are *radii* to a center; or, to change the metaphor, they are figures painted in one group. If critical taste can only fore-arm a preacher against talking at random in this diversity of remark, oratorical instinct will use the diversity in the service of unity. This is one of the *minutiæ* in which the

work of criticism is wholly negative. It simply checks rambling, and thus gives the oratorical instinct a chance to work. It will work as surely as the *vis medicatrix* will work when disease is once held at bay.

(3) The oratorical instinct thus assisted will commonly secure unity of introduction by subordinating all other materials to one. Materials theoretically equal practically fall into the rank of subalterns and chief. Two yield to one. The oratorical instinct perceives this, and it works as Joseph's fancy did in his dream: the inferior sheaves make obeisance. Criticism has practically no direct concern with it. It can only fend off intruding materials, leaving the instinct of the orator free to work its own way to unity of aim.

(4) Neglect of criticism, however, results commonly in double-headed introductions. The form which the want of unity most frequently assumes in this part of a sermon is not that of incoherent rambling, but that which suggests a wavering in the preacher's mind in the choice of a subject. He discourses, first as if one phase of truth were to be his theme; then as if not that but another though kindred phase; and perhaps the subject shapes itself at last as the result of the tentative process through which his own mind has passed in composing his exordium. He has had no controlling wind in his sails to carry him straight on in one course. The introduction, therefore, flaps first this way, then that. Criticism, however, can do no more than to point out the error, and say, "Fix the subject to start with. Define it. Stop that wavering of preliminary thought. Give your oratorical instinct a chance to work in its own way." It will always work in one way, and but one.

3d, The third characteristic of a good introduction

is directness of approach to the subject in hand. Recalling again the mental state of the audience, we observe, that, during the delivery of an exordium, they feel only the interest of expectation. This interest of expectation is from its nature temporary. It flags if it is dallied with. Hence the necessity of direct advance. Several things are needful to secure this quality of directness.

(1) The introduction should not begin at a needless distance from the subject. No defect of discourse is more frequent than that here indicated, — that the sermon begins in a nebulous remoteness from the real theme. How many sermons, think you, are written every year which begin in the garden of Eden? Something or other about the creation of man is the first thought. Adam is nowhere else so important a character, not even in the Turretinian theology, as he is in the introductions of sermons. Eve herself was not so essential to the blessedness of paradise as she is to the comfort of certain preachers in their homiletic exordiums. Long-winded introductions generally possess, in some form, this fault of antipodean beginning.

You will often find that the best beginning is in the middle of your exordium, and this by no hap-hazard. The first half of an introduction often represents, not the demands of the subject, but the disciplinary laboring of your own mind to come at the subject. It may have cost you by far the most toil; but it is the toil of mental apprenticeship. It is a great art, which does not come to a preacher by intuition, to be able to strike into the trail of a subject at the outset, just at the right point of ease in drawing hearers after you. Do not be economical, then, of first thoughts in the introduction Let them go: give them wings. Their

worth is not equal to their cost. If you are to preach on the perseverance of the saints, it is not necessary to begin by remarking that we are all the creatures of one Creator. If you are to discourse on infant baptism, your theme does not hang on the story of the deluge. If your subject is the fall of St. Peter, it is not imperative that you must start with the fall of Adam. If you are to discourse on the end of the world, it does not follow that you must begin with its creation. Begin always with your finished thinking on a subject, not with your first crude attempts to grasp it.

(2) Directness of approach obviously requires progress of thought. An introduction should never return upon itself. It should never do that, which, in the chase, sportsmen call "doubling the course." Of one thought we should say all that is to be said connectedly. On the same principle, the exordium should never dally with a thought. To linger when a preliminary is finished, to pause as if we were delighted with our own work, to yawn as if we knew not what to say next, is indicative of any thing but an eager mind.

(3) Directness of approach requires as great rapidity of progress as the nature of the subject will permit. Progress we must secure always. The degree of rapidity depends on the manageableness of the theme, but it is always safe to press on. Make every thing clear as you proceed, but press on. This one thing do, forgetting the things which are behind. A paragraph, a sentence, a clause, a word, a syllable, which can be omitted, omit. Rapidity of introduction is desirable especially for the sake of brevity. Nothing but experience effectually teaches a preacher the value of brevity in preliminaries. Keep your eye open to it in your own experience. Watch your subjects: see how large

a proportion of them are more deftly introduced with few remarks than with many. Watch your audiences: see how fresh they are for a discussion where you have not wearied them with a long exordium. Watch your own mind: see what a sense of conquest you have when you have come up to a proposition by a quick march.

Rapidity of approach is desirable also as a stimulus to interest. It is a stimulus to the preacher. Rapid movement in composition exhilarates like riding a spirited horse. On the same principle, a rapid introduction is a stimulus to the hearer. Once get the idea into his mind that you do not mean to waste words, and he will not waste attention. He will hear with the same alertness of mind with which you speak. Rapidity of approach to a subject is desirable, furthermore, for the confidence which it wins from hearers in the preacher's mastery of the subject. Napoleon's soldiers trusted him as much for the tremendous marches which he gave them as for the battles in which he led them. They used to say, that, under his leadership, victory was due as much to their legs as to their arms. On a similar principle we trust or distrust a speaker. His quick approach to a theme, if it be clear, is a sign of mastery. We trust him for the business-like way in which he executes the first movement.

(4) Directness of approach is not abruptness. One preacher announces his text, and then remarks, "Without further introduction I invite your attention to the following theme." This is misnamed an introduction. Not a word is uttered preparatory to the subject. We come to the subject by no gradation, but by a leap. If you will observe honestly the inducement to an abrupt beginning, you will find that it is not any homiletic

advantage, but mental vacuity. We adopt it only as a device of ease. Yet directness of introduction admits of exceptions. Eloquence has room for adroitness, if you please to call it such, in the structure of exordiums. Obnoxious doctrines, difficult discussions, special occasions, peculiar relations of speaker to theme and of speaker to hearers may demand such exordiums, and to withhold them for religious reasons is simply not good sense. You might as reasonably refuse to sail obliquely against a head-wind, because oblique sailing resembles deception.

4th, The fourth characteristic of a good introduction is congruity with the character of the sermon.

(1) This requires that the introduction be characteristic of the subject in hand. This suggests the point of defect in many textual exordiums. You will find it to be sometimes the secret of a heavy exordium, that the text has suggested general religious ideas not explanatory of its meaning, not needed by the coming subject, yet good in themselves; and therefore your pen has dropped them as it passed along. They burden the introduction, as scattered barley is a nuisance in a field of wheat. Have you not detected procrustean introductions of this character, in which the preacher seems to have aimed, not to say only necessary things, but to make the introduction of a given length, no more, no less? Of such material as he has, he might add a page or subtract a page, prefix a page or append a page, insert a page or intersperse a page, and it would make no difference, except to change the measure. The subject would neither gain nor lose.

(2) Indolent composing produces incongruous introductions. Are you never afraid of your subject, loath to attack it at once, fain to linger in its out-

skirts, pleased to dally with straggling thoughts which occur to you without effort? In such moods your style of thinking is not intense. You do not glow with the consciousness of a heated theme within. You muse, but the fire does not burn. You feel none of that necessity of production which Dr. Arnold said he often had in reflecting upon the political and social state of England. "I must write," he exclaimed, "or I shall die." Writing then, there, on that theme, he would inevitably have introduced his theme in some intensely characteristic way. Dr. Holmes represents one of his clerical characters as publishing a book of which the title is "Thoughts on the Universe." Similar to this are the introductions composed by a mind which feels no sense of the necessity of delivering itself of a burning theme. Such a mind acts indolently. Its work is discursive and slow. It will be but an accident of authorship if the result is otherwise. True, a man can not feel himself on the verge of syncope in every introduction that he composes: but some sort of necessity must crowd him, growing out of the inspiration of his theme.

(3) Congruity of introduction requires that it be true to its own character as a tributary. "An exordium," says Cicero, "is only the porch." In this respect, congruity may be sacrificed by excessive length. Dr. Johnson has a lay-sermon one-half of which is introductory. This is a temple one-half of which is vestibule. Entire relevance of material does not redeem an introduction of this kind. Disproportion is itself incongruous. Raciness of material is no compensation for prolixity. If it is not interesting as a tributary to the subject, the greater the interest, the greater the incongruity.

(4) The congruity of an introduction may be sacrificed by its superiority to the rest of the sermon in rhetorical qualities. If it is more original in thought, or more brilliant in imagery, or more beautiful in diction, or more stimulating in historical or biographical allusion, or more compactly finished in structure, what is the effect? It is that the discussion flags in the sequel. Instead of rise of interest, you have a fall. Have you not sometimes been sensible of an ebbing of interest after an introduction in which a very stimulating anecdote was told? Through the whole discourse the tide never reached again the high-water mark of that anecdote. There was no more of absolute stillness in the audience, or other evidence of entranced attention. The stimulus of the introduction, whatever be the source of it, should be proportionate to that of the discussion, and therefore must be inferior to it. A sermon should never be remembered by the splendor of its exordium.

(5) Congruity of introduction may be sacrificed by anticipating in it materials which belong to the main body of the sermon. The proper locality of materials in a sermon is a matter requiring very delicate adjustment. Vital forces may depend on the question of location. Even the decision of logical instinct is sometimes neglected. An introduction is sometimes so formed, that the proposition follows from it as a conclusion from premises. The preacher affirms that this is true, and that is true, and the third is true; and therefore the proposition follows. Then he proceeds in his discussion to prove his proposition. The first division, perhaps, explains it; but the second proves it. What is the defect here? It is that of an incongruous location of materials. The introduction has been related

to the proposition as premise to conclusion. The proposition has been proved at the outset, and now it is proved again in the sequel. The introduction has pilfered from the discussion.

In other cases, rhetorical instinct must decide the question of location. Here a more delicate culture is requisite. Shall a didactic paragraph appear as a preliminary, or in the application? Shall an original thought be used in the introduction, or reserved for the discussion? What shall we do with a capital illustration? The logical connections may not be decisive. Rhetorical considerations must settle the question. The introduction should lay claim to nothing which will serve the purpose of the sermon more effectually elsewhere.

(6) The congruity of the introduction requires that it should resemble the body of the sermon sufficiently to suggest it. The first impression which the front of St. Peter's at Rome makes upon a spectator does not suggest to him a church. The architecture of the grand façade is not that of a place of worship, but rather of an immense palace, — rich, gorgeous, imposing, but still a palace, — not a cathedral. Not unlike this is the impression of the introductions to some discourses. They naturally suggest something else than the discourses they precede. The vestibule and the temple do not match well. The result is like that of the juxtaposition of unsympathetic colors.

If, therefore, you have a superlative theme of discourse, and if your thought and style approach its magnificence in your treatment of it, let your introduction give intimation of this. Let logic usher logic. Let beauty herald beauty. Let grandeur prefigure grandeur. Let solemnity foreshadow solemnity. This is as

natural as that the primary rainbow should reflect itself in the secondary one in the sky. If this kind of congruity is too ethereal a grace for criticism to create, yet criticism does much if it recognizes the authority of the oratorical instinct, and defends it.

(7) Congruity of introduction demands also, that, if possible, it shall cover every thing in the sermon which needs introductory remark. That is, every thing in the discourse which needs any preparatory work should, if possible, be prepared for at the beginning. This comprehensiveness of exordium is aimed mainly at the prevention of two defects. One is the omission of some preparatory remark which is needed for subsequent uses. Great force is often gained by making a conclusion seem to return upon and illustrate and use truths with which the sermon began. As a text may be thus used with effect, so also may introductory principles. Why did Mr. Webster, at the close of his celebrated imitation of the eloquence of John Adams, reiterate the language of the exordium? Why say, "I leave off as I began: 'Sink or swim, live or die,' etc."? He did it in unconscious obedience to the oratorical instinct which invented this expedient for reduplicating impression. It is often worth very much to be able to leave off as you began.

If you will study critically the works of Sir Walter Scott, you will often find a singular compactness of structure connecting his beginnings with his endings. The beginnings are preparatory to the endings, and the endings throw back a light upon the beginnings. A perfect discourse will often have a similar plot in its construction. Its introduction is a storehouse of materials which do not fully disclose their design till the conclusion returns upon and appropriates them. When

a sermon has this unique and compact structure, the introduction and conclusion are like the buttresses of a suspension-bridge. One is as necessary as the other, and they support all that hangs between. I am aware that this may seem fanciful when stated thus as a point in homiletic theory; and to prove it by illustration would be tedious. Yet you will all experience illustrations of it in your own sermons. Your oratorical instinct will much more frequently construct such retrospective conclusions, if your introductions are so comprehensive as to make it possible to "leave off as you began."

The other defect which a complete introduction will prevent is that of a cumbrous interspersion of preliminaries in the body of a sermon. By observing critically the structure of sermons, you will often discover a multitude of remarks scattered here and there, which are strictly introductory in their character. Their bearing is preparative entirely: they have no other purpose. Now it is to explain, then to excite attention, again to dignify the subject; to do, in a word, just that which it is the aim of the introduction to do. Some discourses are marked by nothing else so strikingly as by the abundance of these interspersed preliminaries. Some of them must be interspersed; but the large majority can be, and ought to be, packed into the introduction.

It should therefore be a study to say in the exordium as nearly as possible every thing of a preliminary nature which must be said anywhere. Clear the deck thus for action. Sermons which are begun without an introduction are, in the majority of cases, laden with interspersed encumbrances; and their utterance in the body of the sermon commonly requires more time than if they are given in their proper place in the exordium.

LECTURE XVIII.

THE INTRODUCTION: MODESTY, SUGGESTIVENESS.

5TH, Continuing the discussion of the theme of the last lecture, I remark that the fifth characteristic of a good introduction is modesty.

What does modesty in an exordium require? The reply should aim at two things: one is to answer the inquiry as related to the exordium alone; the other is to treat by way of *excursus* the quality of modesty in all parts of pulpit discourse. This is one of the many topics of homiletic discussion which branch over the limits of the case in hand. Modesty limited to the introduction would not require prolonged treatment; but, extended through a sermon, it is a vital quality, and yet it comes most prominently to view in the exordium. To save repetition, therefore, let us consider it as a generic quality, essential to all parts of effective speech, the exordium included.

(1) Thus extending the inquiry, I answer, Modesty requires a sensible reserve in allusions to the person or character of the speaker. Such allusions should be made, if at all, only to meet necessities, never to gratify self-consciousness. It is said of Mr. Grattan, the Irish orator, that he never once indulged in such allusions through his whole parliamentary career. In listening for six years to the preaching of Rev. Albert

Barnes I heard but two allusions to himself from his lips. On the Sunday after his restoration to the pulpit, when he had been suspended for heresy for six months, and when a packed audience had assembled to hear from him a personal discourse, he said not one word about himself, or his recent history.

Three varieties of fault deserve mention with special reference to the modesty of the pulpit. Though not by any means limited to introductions, they are more frequent there than in the other parts of a sermon. One of these is a needless obtrusion of professional authority. It is an offense in the pulpit, if the preacher harps upon his divine mission, the sacredness of his trust, the solemnity of his vows of ordination, the obligation of men to hear him as the messenger of God. This seems very solemn: occasionally, peculiarity of circumstances may render it impressive. But it may be, also, and if often done must be, flat even to the point of disgust. Another form of unwise self-disclosure is the needless expression of the speaker's religious experiences. The principle here involved is the same as before. To speak of one's own awe in view of the magnitude of a subject, of one's inability to do justice to it, of the weight of its burden on the heart, of the prayers and the tears with which it has been considered, and of the overwhelming convictions of the truth which one is about to utter, may be occasionally pertinent, and may, therefore, carry its own justification on its face. But it may also be, and if often done it must be, religious twaddle. No man can safely make a hobby of his own religious life. Such self-disclosure in the pulpit will never be used by a modest preacher as a homiletic make-shift for a solemn introduction. The religious experience of a preacher must be worked

into sermons indirectly, and for the most part unconsciously.

Another form of immodest intrusion of self in discourse is a mannerism of style in the excessive use of the pronoun "I." Have you ever observed how much more difficult it is to avoid the excessive use of the *ego* in introductions than in any other part of a discourse? In the introduction we are struggling to lift our subject up into sight. The mind in that labor seems often to work as sailors do in weighing anchor, when they sing a chant which means nothing, but is a nervous help to the muscular strain. So a preacher will measure off an exordium with the formulæ, "I think," "I suppose," "I believe," "I know," "I feel," when he is not at all chargeable with conscious egotism. Yet the impression of egotism will be made upon an audience if the use of the *ego* be immoderately frequent.

(2) Modesty in the exordium requires certain things indicative of respect for the audience. A modest self-appreciation is twin-brother to a respectful appreciation of others. This will make itself obvious in the relations of a speaker to his hearers. Among other things of this class may be named a carefully constructed introduction. A sloven in his dress betrays disrespect for others as well as for himself. So a heedless jumble of materials in an exordium indicates indifference to the claims of an audience upon a speaker's courtesy. But, on the other hand, modesty requires freedom from excessive care to make things plain. Vigorous thought, a manly style, the omission of needless explanations, and celerity of progress in the exordium are tacit signs of the speaker's estimate of the abilities of his hearers.

Modesty demands freedom from arrogant insinua-

tions. You may betray disrespect for your hearers without uttering it in words. If you feel it, you will insinuate it unconsciously. One preacher says, "If I succeed in making you understand my meaning." Another says, "If I succeed in making my meaning understood." What is the difference? In words, almost nothing: in spirit, the whole distance between respect and arrogance. In countless forms of speech you may turn a contemptuous shoulder to an audience, and yet not utter a word of literal disparagement. On the same principle, modesty requires a genial judgment of the character of an audience. It stands to reason, that, if you would win men, you must assume all that can be honestly assumed of good in them. Modesty in any preacher will breathe into his discourse, wherever occasion calls for it, a genial opinion of an audience. Without a word of flattery, it will often disarm a suspicion, or break up indifference, by convincing a hearer that you are predisposed to think well of him.

Modesty of discourse, and in exordiums especially, requires often a kindly treatment of the prejudices of hearers. None but an egotist of intense type will fail to see something to respect in a prejudice which is shared by many minds. Such a prejudice is always the extreme of a truth. An intelligent preacher can not help respecting it, and he may honestly express that respect as a help to correcting it.

(3) Modesty in introductions, and elsewhere as well, requires freedom from certain affectations of excellence in the preacher. A truly modest mind is wedded to realities. It will not stoop to an affected virtue. It demands, therefore, among other things, freedom from affected virtues of style. An inflated style not only offends simplicity, as we have seen, in the introduction

itself, but it implies vanity in the preacher. He affects a style which he knows to be unreal to himself. He puffs; he swells; he blusters. In like manner, modesty requires freedom from an affectation of dramatic power in the preacher The dramatic faculty is a magnificent gift for the uses of the pulpit, but a perilous one, there is so powerful a temptation to overact by affecting a form or a degree of it which is unreal.

Modesty of discourse, and in introductions especially, requires freedom from an affectation of humility. It is difficult to say which is the more repulsive extreme, — the vanity which parades itself in egotism, or the vanity which disguises itself in humility. Genuine modesty forbids each as imperatively as the other. If an affectation of this virtue could always be as transparently humble as it was on the death-bed of Dr. Samuel Parr, we might tolerate it as a *lusus naturæ*. "England," said he, "has produced three great classical scholars: one was Bentley; another, Porson; the third modesty forbids me to mention." But not all preachers have the artlessness of Dr. Parr. In homiletic exordiums this affectation is usually found in the use of stereotyped expressions of humility. Confessing personal unworthiness, acknowledging that the sermon is the least of God's mercies, invoking divine forgiveness for sin about to be committed in the preaching of it commonly mean nothing when thrust into the preliminaries of a discourse. They are relics of monastic morbidness, which, in a healthy Protestant mind, may be something much worse than that. If not conscious hypocrisy, they may make the worst impression of that upon an audience.

(4) Modesty of discourse demands freedom from excess of modesty. Affected modesty is not excess, but

an assumption of unreal virtue. A more respectable because a more honest fault is an excess of genuine modesty. In introductions peculiarly, it is apt to betray itself in apologies for the sermon, a pleading for charitable criticism of its defects, a depreciation of the preacher's abilities, all of which are perfectly genuine. They make the impression of entire sincerity, yet of a morbid selfhood. Modesty is a robust virtue. It has in it a large vein of self-respect. It not only consists with, but in part consists in, self-appreciation. It demands in a preacher a sense of what is due to him as a man, and due to his professional position as a religious teacher. A cringing introduction may be becoming to a speech on the scaffold, never to a sermon in the Christian pulpit. St. Paul's charge to Timothy probably had this virtue in view, among others, "Let no man despise thy youth." Be a man in thy youthful graces. Speak, act, look, the manly preacher. Robert Hall said the same thing more tartly, when he advised that no man should ask pardon for having been born.

6th, A sixth characteristic of a good introduction is suggestiveness. It is an advantage to a discourse, if the introduction be one which lays a moderate but positive tax upon the intellect of the hearers. Set them to thinking early in the progress of a sermon. Thus you most effectually prepare them for a vigorous train of thought in the sequel. Were you ever stimulated to an attentive hearing by listening to an introduction made up of such discoveries as these, "man is everywhere in pursuit of happiness;" "life is short, and death certain;" "by all men's confession all men are sinners;" "there is a great difference in the characters of men"? Yet are not these weighty truths? Doubtless. But stupendous truths must often be assumed as

too well known to excite interest in their hackneyed forms. John Foster remarks it as one of the collateral evidences of human depravity that men can think of the most affecting truths without emotion; but mental inertia, on even the most appalling realities, is not necessarily a sin. It may be only the inevitable sluggishness of the intellect over hackneyed thought.

(1) The suggestive quality may often be cultivated by selecting the narrative form of exordium. Animated narrative always interests. An historical incident, a biographical fact, a mythological legend, a scientific phenomenon, if it illustrates a principle which the subject needs in the introduction, may be the most stimulating material for your purpose. One such brief narrative may be sufficient to save a hearer from listlessness.

(2) Nearly allied to this is the descriptive form of introduction. If description of a place, a scene, an event, a monument, a picture, a statue, a person, a process of manufacture, an invention, can be naturally made to freshen a stale truth of religion, and if your subject needs that truth in some unhackneyed form, one page of such description may be the one lively passage which shall arouse and hold a hearer's interest. A good description is a truth painted. Almost anybody will look at a painting of that which nobody would listen to, if droned in the ear. Nobody is uninterested in an illustrated newspaper. The eye is a lens; the ear, a drum. The eye magnifies; the ear only echoes.

(3) Raciness of introduction may often be gained by originality of philosophical remark. One thought which to the hearer is new may carry the weight of many old thoughts in company with it. The exordium need not sparkle with brilliants. Even one old thought

vitalized by a speaker's experience of it, so that, as rejuvenated by him, it emits the sparkle of novelty, may set a hearer upon the same experience. Original thinking is marvelously self-diffusive. Very little of such thinking exists. One such thought speedily becomes everybody's thought. The reason is that everybody's mind is a fertile soil for it, and instantly sets the reproductive energy of nature at work. You can never waste a new thought upon any audience, if you succeed in making it clear. Fairly plant it, and nothing is more sure to grow.

(4) Suggestiveness in an exordium may be promoted by tact in improving the circumstances of an occasion. Here opens an immense field of illustration from the history of eloquence. The pulpit furnishes its full share. St. Paul's introduction at Mars Hill is an example. Rev. Dr. Stillman, a pastor in Boston in the time of the Revolution, preached, on the Sunday after the arrival of the intelligence from England that the Stamp Act had been repealed, on this text, and with this introduction, "Were I to serve you in the ministry of the gospel for a century, I might never again have so favorable an opportunity to address you upon these words: 'As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.'" He then described the exultation of the people over the news from England, which was in everybody's thoughts, and from that he passed on to consider the greater joy which the gospel should excite in the minds of men. How to make the popular excitement tributary to the aim of the pulpit and the uses of holy time was a critical question. Many preachers would have given it up in despair, and preached a political harangue in keeping with the bonfires the cinders of which were smoking in the streets

Not so Dr. Stillman. He exhibited his power to control events, instead of being controlled by them, by that simple yet really studied and elaborate exordium. It combined the religious spirit of a preacher with the genius of an orator.

Great orators in the pulpit have generally evinced their oratorical tact in turning to account providential circumstances. One of the most successful pastors of New York owes his reputation largely to the fact, that, for many years after he began his ministry, he employed a member of his church to gather up for him all the local events of interest occurring during the week, in the politics, the commerce, the police, and the religion of the city, and to bring to him confidentially a *resumé* of them on the evening of Saturday. From these he then selected such as he could usefully employ in introducing his subjects of discourse on the following day. He had the reputation of being a studious man. His sermons were evidence that he did not spend his time in the streets. Yet often, on Sundays, he had a strange knowledge of events not announced in the papers till Monday morning. He seemed to be a marvelous combination of the studious pastor with the man of the world.

(5) The remarks above made indicate, further, that the suggestive quality of exordiums may easily be overwrought. This may be done by an over-crowded introduction. Being a preliminary, this part of a sermon will not bear to be crammed with materials. No matter how skillfully condensed, it must not be burdensome in its weight. It ought not to sparkle all over with gems of thought, and novelties of incident, and inventions of style. The raciness of an exordium may be overdone by a startling kind or form of material

A moderate paradox is not objectionable, but a glaring paradox is intolerable. Terrific material is not becoming to an introduction. Exclamatory exordiums are generally extremes. The boldest forms of rhetorical figure, like vision and apostrophe, are abuses of the exordium. Whitefield's famous apostrophe to "Father Abraham," in his well-known introduction to the sermon on the non-existence of sects in heaven, was too violent for the locality it occupied in the sermon.

The suggestiveness of an introduction may be exaggerated by a hortatory style. Very few forms of speech are so difficult to sustain as that of direct hortation. Extraordinary circumstances may justify it. Chrysostom, just after an earthquake, began a sermon thus, "Do you see the power of God? Do you see the benignity of God? His power, because the solid world he has shaken; his benignity, because the falling world he has supported." We may safely preach similar exordiums when our audiences have been shaken by earthquakes.

(6) An inquiry which deserves a brief *excursus* from this point in our discussion is this, Is it expedient to preface a sermon by remarks upon the topic of current interest in the community at the time? A sudden death, a political crisis, a recent effort of charity, a conflagration, a declaration of war, an insurrection, exciting news from abroad may often have filled the newspapers of the previous week. Everybody's mind is full of it. All are talking about it, before the service and afterwards. Some preachers so far bend to the breeze of local excitement, in such a case, as to remark upon it extemporaneously by way of preface to the sermon. Is it a wise method of introducing the sermon of the day? Much may be said for and against this habit

The following particulars suggest the most important principles respecting it.

This expedient has certain obvious advantages. It is an advantage to a preacher to take hearers in their own mood of interest. The preacher thus comes down to the hearer. This gives him a powerful leverage in his attempt to move them.

It may be the means of augmenting a hearer's respect for the preacher. If he handles the interpolated subject wisely, it is a sign of his intelligence, it is a token of his enterprise. He seems to know what is going on in the world. He reads the newspapers. For the moment he is the peer of laymen in their own vocations. Therefore this expedient helps to relieve the clergy from the prejudice which always exists against them, — that they are men of a different world from the common world; that they live in the past; that they live in abstractions; that they move in ruts; that they are so intent on another world that they know little and care little about this world. The habit in question tends to rid a preacher of that stereotyped criticism.

Often such prefatory remarks can be made directly tributary to the purpose of the sermon. The theme of local interest may be directly in line with the theme of discourse. All human experience is an illustration of something with which the pulpit is concerned. Human government illustrates divine government; human society is full of suggestions of divine relations; the events of every man's life are divine providences; human actions are divine decrees; a sudden death is a voice from eternity; a shipwreck is a divine mystery suggestive of some of the profoundest problems of religion; a great crime is a divine warning; a great war may be the fulfillment of a prophecy; a commercial

panic involves the whole principle of faith, which is central to salvation. The analogies which bind together temporal life and eternal life are innumerable. The habit of a preacher's mind discloses them to him in their most instructive and fascinating forms. The Bible itself, the model of the wisest religious teaching, is but a section of real life, — the life of individuals, of families, of cities, of nations, of races, the life of our common humanity, taken from universal history, and recorded, under divine illumination, for a divine purpose.

Further: the method in question serves to unite a heterogeneous audience in the same mood of feeling. Often the prime difficulty in moving an audience is that of bringing them into unison about any thing. Much is gained if we can start the current of sympathetic interest. The magnetic influence of numbers may sustain it in a transfer, when it is once in flow. Again: it is something in favor of the device in question that it uses divine providence as a tributary to the preaching of the divine Word. In the profound Christian view of things, all events which arouse communities are providences. Divine providence is the ally of divine grace; and divine grace uses divine providence. The preacher's words are the connecting link. They may often be the "word in season."

These are weighty reasons for the habit in question, and would often be conclusive in the judgment of an alert preacher. On the other hand, certain perils attend the habit, specially if the habit of one becomes the usage of many. They may wisely restrict it to occasional use. One such peril is the danger that it may occupy time which would be more valuable in the delivery of the sermon. Often the sermon will be such that not a moment should be added to the service of the pulpit needlessly.

A second danger is that the topic of local interest may not be in keeping with the Lord's Day. The very thing most needful for the right use of the hour may be to divert attention from the secular fever. A third peril may be that the subject of popular excitement will not be in tune with the sermon. Unity of impression from the services of the hour may be hopelessly destroyed by it. A fourth contingency is that it may tempt to ill-digested remarks. They will often be made on the spur of the moment. A fifth danger is that such remarks may revive an interest which nothing in the sermon can equal. The sermon may, therefore, suffer in the contrast. Better silence than such an overwhelming of the sermon with matters superior to it in the feelings of the hearers.

These are perils which always threaten such a device, if it becomes the usage of the pulpit. They suggest obvious practical restrictions. The restrictions would, in the large majority of cases, prevent the expedient in question from being habitually used. They would make it an occasional device, not a constant nor a very frequent one. The advantages of it are contingent on the avoidance of its evils. The objections to it, when they apply, are imperative.

LECTURE XIX.

THE INTRODUCTION: VARIETIES, COMPOSITION.

IV. We may gain some advantage in the practical application of the principles which have been thus far advanced, by observing, as a fourth general topic, the most important varieties of method in approaching subjects of discourse.

In any prolonged service in the pulpit, the most serious defect of introductions will commonly be a want of variety. If you have ever listened for years to the preaching of one man, your experience has been exceptional, if you have not learned to anticipate his exordiums from the announcement of his texts. Not only is there a sameness of individual preachers, but certain hackneyed introductory thoughts and phrases are the common property of the pulpit. Because a preacher has a text, why should he never, by any felicitous accident, allow himself to practice the varied introductions which are often so stimulating and so graceful in the best addresses of the best class of secular orators? Certain it is, that the principles we have considered, if practically applied to the construction of sermons, would result in diversity. The most important of these varieties I proceed now to name at the risk of occasional repetition of things already discussed in other connections.

1st, I name them varieties of approach, rather than

introductions, in order to include the first of them, which is that of approach to a subject without an introduction. An explanation of a text, and a derivation of a subject from it are often the whole of the preliminary material. Such sermons have no introduction proper. I can not assent to the view of Theremin, which Vinet indorses, that what they call the "expository introduction" is always suitable. The expository equivalent for an introduction, as I should prefer to call it, often excludes more interesting materials which the subject needs. Sometimes, also, it is positively an evil, because it is needless. The text does not need it: the sermon does not need it. In such a case it is a heap of rubbish thrown in to fill a gap. Nothing grows in it: nothing is built upon it.

Further: it has become a stereotyped formulary of the pulpit. For this reason it is often less impressive than intrinsically it deserves to be. We shall be in little danger of an extreme, if we never use it when we can not defend it as the best approach possible. There is always one best avenue to the subject. The expository approach, if chosen, should be that one. Choose it for its specific congruity, as you would choose any other, never for its convenience only, never in blind imitation of clerical usage. One sign of the weakness of the German pulpit is the indolent frequency with which the text and the subject are linked by the most tame of commonplaces in expository remark.

2d, Another variety may be named the introduction applicatory of the text; not explanatory, but applicatory. Its design is to attract attention to the subject of the text as one which concerns the present audience. To this variety belong all forms of exordium which are designed to modernize the practical bearings of the

text The text is a promise to Abraham, or a confession of David, or a rebuke to the Pharisees, or an exhortation to the Church at Laodicea. You wish to transfer it to modern times, to American hearers, to a dozen persons in the audience whom you believe to need it, to one hearer for whom your whole sermon is written. Whatever you say in making that transfer of the text, and in aiming it well, is an introduction applicatory of the text. The practical necessity of it obvious.

3d, Another variety of approach may be named the introduction intensive of the text by comparison with other Scriptures. It may be much to your purpose to call attention to the fact that your text is not a solitary one; that it expresses a truth often affirmed in the Bible; that the doctrine of St. Paul was taught by Moses; that the precept of St. John was originated by Christ; that the fact in the Acts was foretold by Isaiah; that the principle in the Hebrews pervades the whole economy of the Old Testament. What is the exact aim of such comparisons? Not necessarily explanation, not chiefly confirmation. They are intensive expedients. They magnify the importance of the truth which the text teaches: they are, therefore, a purely rhetorical method of setting the subject in position before the audience.

4th, A fourth variety of approach is the introduction explanatory of principles involved in the discussion. You propose, for instance, to show "the necessity of an Atonement from the convictions of the human conscience." You introduce the subject by remarks upon conscience as a source of evidence of truth. You affirm that it is a reliable source; that it is one form of divine revelation; that the common sense of men recog-

nizes its authority. You proceed, therefore, to interrogate it, to learn what are its teachings as to the forgiveness of sin. Such a train of remark has nothing to do with the text: it is explanatory of a principle which underlies the whole argument which you are about to unfold. This kind of introduction elaborate preaching will often necessitate.

5th, A fifth form of approach may be the introduction narrative of facts which are necessary to an appreciation of the subject. The narrative introduction looks forward to the subject, not backward to the text. Dr. Blair introduces a discourse on "the value of religion in adversity" by describing human life as a series of changes, disappointments, bereavements. This naturally leads to the inquiry how men can best be prepared for such a life. The answer is the theme of the sermon.

6th, A sixth variety of approach may be the introduction illustrative of either facts or principles involved in the discussion. "The moral uses of the existence of wicked men" is a profound philosophical subject for a sermon. The patriarch furnishes a text inspired for the purpose: "Wherefore do the wicked live?" But how shall I come at the subject vividly? How shall I approach it by some other avenue than the hackneyed remarks that the author of the text was Job; that he uttered it in a mood of despondency; that we, also, often ask the same question; and so on? I answer, Take an individual case of the injury done by one wicked man. Take such a character as that of Richelieu, or the Duke of Alva, or Lord Byron, or Aaron Burr. Choose your example shrewdly from that class of minds which your hearers will be likely to appreciate. Show the evil of one such life to the world,

to the Church, to the souls of men. Paint it till it seems, as it is, a great mystery that such men live. Such an example might be so pictured that every hearer in your congregation would be silently asking the question of your text for himself. No other subject should seem for the time so natural and so necessary as that of your sermon. To this class of exordiums belong those which are founded on historical or mythological anecdote. A dignified anecdote may illustrate the germinal principle of a discourse, and therefore may introduce it felicitously.

7th, A seventh variety of approach to a subject may be the introduction commendatory of the subject. The object of this is simply to exalt the dignity of the subject in the estimation of the hearer. Several subordinate varieties are worthy of mention under this class.

(1) One is that in which the commendation consists in direct assertion of the importance of the theme. An ingenious assertion of the dignity of a theme may be a magnifying lens between it and the hearer. Said one preacher, after announcing his text, "The truth I am about to discuss is, in my view, of such magnitude, that it may probably decide the eternal destiny of some soul which hears it proclaimed to-day."

(2) Another variety of the commendatory introduction is that which consists of a comparison of the subject with an inferior topic of interest. When Professor Webster was on trial in Boston for the murder of Dr. Parkman, a pastor in that city preached on the final judgment. He began by alluding to the thrilling excitement with which many of his hearers had thronged the court-room on the day before; and from that scene he proceeded to lift their thoughts up to the great tribunal, which, also, they would one day

throng, no longer as spectators, but as sinners on trial. Such an exordium exalted the dignity of the subject by comparison with an inferior theme.

(3) A third variety is that in which the commendation consists of cumulative remarks from which the importance of the subject grows into view gradually. The plan of a discourse was once proposed in this lecture-room on "the ascension of Christ." The introduction was a series of philosophical remarks. The preacher observed that every event in the life of a founder of a new religion is important to a believer in that religion; that this is eminently true of Christ; that the significance of Christ's life accumulates in the events which crowd its closing scenes; and that with his ascension are associated the last words he uttered on earth. From this series of reflections the dignity of the subject of our Lord's ascension receives fresh illustration.

(4) A fourth variety is that in which a subject is exalted by association with illustrious human authorities. This is the effect of exordiums in which occur apt quotations of the opinions of eminent men. Introductions in which expressive proverbs are used are of the same character. Our sense of the worth of the subject is stirred by its association with authorities.

(5) To these may be added a fifth variety not often heard in the American pulpit. It is that in which the dignity of the subject is suggested by a prayer. In the German pulpit one often hears the text announced, and, soon after, a prayer for divine guidance in the discussion and the reception of the theme derived from it. In some parts of Germany this is the more usual method. What is the purpose of that parenthetic prayer? It has a double purpose. It is an act

of worship: it is also an indirect commendation of the subject to the hearers. It deserves to be named, because it exists among the usages of the pulpit. Still it is not a natural expedient. A simple rhetorical taste does not approve it. Prayer should, under no circumstances, be regarded or used as a rhetorical expedient. To an American audience, under any circumstances, it has the look of sanctimonious formality.

8th, An eighth variety of approach is the introduction connective with the preceding discourse. This will often, not always, be the most natural exordium in serial preaching. In controversial sermons an exordium will often grow naturally out of a reference to the discourse of the opponent whose positions you are controverting. The late Rev. Mr. Merrill of Peacham, Vt., was once called upon to preach to an audience which had just listened to a terrific and denunciatory sermon by a preacher of the Second Advent. The preacher's text had been, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." When Mr. Merrill rose to address them, he began by turning the alarm of the audience into mirth, by saying, that, whatever might be true of the second coming of Christ and the world's end, there was one lesson of the text to which they had been listening, which the preacher had forgotten; and that was that it was of no use to attempt to scare men into religion, for even a ghost could not do it. His opponent's whole discourse, and the oppressive effect of it upon the hearers were swept away in a moment by that use of his opponent's text.

9th, A ninth variety of approach to a subject may be that in which the introduction is a condensed review of another subject related to that of the sermon

in hand. Some subjects are the natural preliminaries to other subjects: therefore a natural introduction of one proposition may be an epitome of a discussion of another. You will often find in published discourses the introductions of which strike you as especially weighty, that those introductions are practically compressed preliminary discussions. You may find that you have yourselves sometimes unconsciously fallen upon this method of introduction. Without designing it, you observe that a peculiarly rich exordium to one of your own sermons would, with little or no change, be itself the plan of a distinct discourse. Your oratorical instinct has done just that which rhetorical criticism would have advised as an expedient of condensation. This, if not carried to an extreme, is a grand quality in preaching. It enriches the productions of the pulpit. Often it is a necessity. No other form of exordium seems natural, for the want of this.

10th, A tenth variety of approach to a subject may be the introduction which consists of a request for the attention of an audience. Some subjects as developed from some texts need no other introductory process than this. A sacramental sermon may be so far suggested to a hearer by the time, the place, the symbols before him, and by the preparatory lecture, that no other preparatory process is needful than the single step of asking the audience to follow you in certain meditations on a certain theme. Liable as this method is to abuse, it is legitimate. It is not necessarily confined to a brief and single request. It may be expanded into an appeal for devout attention, for patient attention, for an uninterrupted attention.

I sum up the result of our discussion of the introduction, thus far, in this enumeration of varieties, not

as furnishing models by example, not as a schedule from which selection in any given case can be made. They are useless for any such purpose. The main object of the enumeration is, by thus grouping these varieties together, to illustrate how much variety is practicable. There is no need of humdrum. There is no need of the uniform expository equivalent for an introduction. If you are once possessed of this conviction, and if, then, your critical judgment is disciplined by practice to a varied selection of methods, your rhetorical instinct will at length work unconsciously in shaping this part of a sermon, as in every other. Your exordiums will be rich, inviting, quickening, because they will be growths, — natural growths, — not pieces of mechanism.

V. Before passing to the next topic of discussion in the analysis of a sermon, I wish to suggest a few hints on the work of composing the introduction. The exor dium has been called a preacher's cross. It is the most facile subject of criticism, but the most difficult of execution. Vinet says that it is like the fine and precise operations in mechanics, in which every workman may end in success, but only after having broken more than once the instruments employed. You have probably already experienced in some degree the common lot of preachers in this respect. A subject has opened richly to your mind; thoughts upon it have been fluent and affluent; illustrations of it have been luxuriant; details of style, even, have flashed upon you invitingly; your fingers have felt nimble with the pen; and you could have plunged into the heart of the discussion with bounding eagerness. But this drudgery of an introduction has balked you; it has exhausted your invention; it has chilled your imagination; it has put out the light

of your subject; and you have found yourself, perhaps, floundering in the middle of it, as in a slough of despond, feeling no bottom, and unable to reach a margin. Perhaps, after a hard morning's work, the thing is finished; but it dissatisfies and annoys you; it seems forced, insignificant, disjointed, objectless; and you feel that a critic, comparing your mental labor with its result, would be severe, but severely just, in saying with Ahimaaz, "I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was." To those beginners in the work of sermonizing who know any thing of this experience, the following hints will not be untimely.

1st, Define to your own mind, to start with, the specific object of the introduction in the case in hand. Inquire, What does this subject, as I propose to treat it on this occasion, for this audience, need in the way of preparatory remark? does it need one thing? more than one? any thing? what is the most imperative thing? will the expository equivalent be the best thing? not will the expository equivalent be passable, occupy the time, but will it advance my work to the heart of the discussion in the most natural and quickening way? These questions, perhaps, may be answered in the asking; but they should be asked. No other composing is so difficult as that in which the mind does not know itself. Did you ever witness the composition and the chirography of "Planchette"? How the pen sprawls and splutters, and caricatures sense, till it requires an expert in "spiritualistic" phenomena to make sense of it! Like that is the composing of an exordium in which the pen does the work without a self-conscious and intent mind behind it.

The effect is as painful to the hearer as to the preacher, if you labor to introduce a subject which

needs no introduction. It resembles the awkwardness of introducing to each other, with fastidious forms of politeness, two strangers, as you suppose, who happen to have been old friends before you were born. It is equally painful to see a preacher laboring at the wrong object in an exordium. Why should you insinuate your way along, like an Indian warrior in the grass, against a prejudice which nobody feels? Why vindicate your divine commission before an audience in which nobody doubts it? Why affirm and prop up your right to speak when the fact of your speaking is a proof of your right? Why wriggle your way to a theme which is one of the standard subjects of the pulpit? Why begin at the expulsion from Eden, to bring up the attention of your hearers, by slow and zigzag approaches, to a present emergency which they are trembling with eagerness to meet? What would Cicero have achieved in the first oration against Catiline, if he had begun with the story of Romulus?

More distressing still is it to see a preacher laboring in an exordium without an object. This you will find to be sometimes your real peril. We lounge and saunter into some introductions. We must say something. Something comes to mind which we can say. It may surely enough as well be said now as ever; and down it goes upon the page, and we try to feel encouraged that we have made a beginning. Then we go up and down in the earth, seeking what we may devour, till with another remark, and a third, and a fourth, we have gathered a sufficient number to make up a loose, ragged, patched piece of manufacture, rather than of brain-work, which, by the usage of the books, we call an introduction. But it has no object; therefore no cohesion; consequently, for the purpose of an exordium, no

meaning. One of the old creeds found in the archives of a certain church in this State, and once presented according to the ancient Congregational usage, by a candidate for admission into the church, commences thus: "I believe in one God. I believe that he is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. I believe that he made this world, partly out of nothing, and partly out of unfit matter." A good symbol that of the materials of some introductions to sermons.

2d, Review the growth of your subject in its working upon your own mind. Every subject on which you are at all prepared to preach has a history in your own thinking. It has a growth there. You have not come to it at a bound. There is an avenue of thought somewhere by which you have come into consciousness of that growth. Some good angel has been practicing an introduction of that subject upon you. Look back, therefore, and recall your own mental history upon it. What has interested you in it? what has defined it clearly? what illustrations of it, or about it, have made it vivid? what uses of it have been valuable to you? Two benefits will be likely to follow from such inquiries. They will commonly suggest the best materials for an introduction of the subject to an audience. Nothing else is so prolific of available thought for transmitting a truth as the history of one's own mind upon it. That which has clarified a subject to you will help you to invent ways of clearing it to others. Difficulties conquered often show how they might have been avoided. A fortress taken by storm discloses how it might have been taken by stratagem. So your conquest of a subject may put you in possession of the means of leading others to it without the struggle of conquest.

Your own history upon a subject will be likely, also, to save you from the error of assuming too much in favor of the intelligence of your hearers. This is sometimes the occasion of a defective exordium. It assumes too much knowledge, too much interest, too much readiness, therefore, to follow the discussion. It gives to hearers no sufficient time or help to grow to the subject as the preacher grew to it in his experience. Results of a long mental training are sprung upon a hearer unawares. You will be spared this mistake, if you consider wisely the process of your own mind in mastering your theme. If preliminary thinking was necessary to you, still more may it be so to your audience. You will not be likely to ask them to leap a chasm under which you were obliged to dig a tunnel.

3d, Compose the introduction with the whole discourse in view. Does not this suggest a very obvious cause of unfitness in many exordiums? They are written before the subject is mentally digested. I sometimes detect evidence in sermons that the introduction was written before the subject was even defined. The preacher has started with a text, and has written up to the proposition. What the subject is has shaped itself on the way. A good exordium can not possibly be composed thus at random. To construct and charge, and aim and discharge, an introduction well, you must know what you want to introduce. The subject, the discussion, the application, all the structural elements of the sermon, should be before you. The living spirit of the sermon, too, must be in you. A lifeless exordium is often lifeless for the reason that it has no living union with the subject in the mind of the preacher. He has mechanized it, instead of grafting it. Worse even than that, it may be a piece of

dead timber nailed to a living tree. You can not neutralize this error by any artifices of style. Nothing can live but life.

4th, Therefore do not compose the introduction till the plan of the whole discourse is outlined. Write out a plan of the entire sermon from text to *finis;* adjust the form of the proposition; devise the outline of the argument; invent the chief illustrations; shape the application; decide upon the method of closing: in a word, get every thing before you which is to be introduced. Put it on paper, if your mind needs, as many do, the help of the eye. Then you know what the exordium ought to be: you can set about it intelligently, and you will save time by this preliminary work of getting ready to work. Why not, then, write the body of the sermon in full before composing the exordium? Some advocate this. I would not say that it should never be done. Some minds may work well in that way; but the majority of minds, I think, will experience in it this disadvantage, that, when the body of a sermon is written in full, the mind of the preacher has lost the introductory mood. This, too, is a matter for experiment. In composing a sermon, you will discover that your mind moves with your work. Transitions in that are changes of mental mood in you. Your sensibilities change with the demands of your work. You pass through an introductory mood, an argumentative mood, an illustrative mood, an applicatory mood At the close you are absorbed in practical application. The excitement of your sensibilities is more intense than it was, or ought to have been, at the beginning. It is not natural, then, for your mind to go back upon its track, and set about introducing the theme.

5th, Throw yourself into the work with enthusiasm

Daniel Webster said of the American Revolution, that our fathers went to war against a preamble. A pre amble, then, may be the very gist of the business Treat it as such in sermonizing. Prepare an introduction as if every thing depended on the first impression. Strike as if the blow were to be like that of stamping a coin — there being no second blow.

Critics have observed of Shakespeare, that he always aims to make his characters define themselves at their first appearance. Their individuality is clear in the first words they utter. They never run together in our first conceptions of them. They are like faces with strong features: we see them once, and always remember them. Guizot observes of Othello and Desdemona, that their characters are distinct on their first appearance, though one speaks but thirty lines, and the other but fifteen. So introductions should be composed with keen appreciation of the significance of first impressions. I repeat, therefore, make a business of them. Be in earnest in them, and you will find earnest hearers from the very first word. Not only strike when the iron is hot, but make it hot by striking. Modern science tells us that motion is heat: a blow, therefore, evolves heat. A flash of fire is often visible at the moment and at the spot at which a solid cannon-ball strikes the plate of an iron-clad ship. The principle involved in the phenomenon is as true of mind as of iron. Mind has a quality corresponding to that by which iron evolves latent heat. The concussion of mind with mind will often evolve an interest which will make itself obvious in the faces of hearers. It is quickening to a speaker to observe the instantaneousness with which the first gleam of earnest working on his part will reproduce itself in an audience

Dr. John Blair Smith, president of Hampden-Sidney College, was the most eloquent preacher of his day in Virginia. He was accustomed to write in full no part of his sermons, except the introductions. These he elaborated with unwearied care. Such introductions gave to a man of his temperament a momentum in public address which enabled him to proceed extemporaneously on the same level. His experience justified his estimate of the value of a good beginning.

LECTURE XX.

THE PROPOSITION: DEFINITION, NECESSITY.

THE proposition is that part of a discourse by which its subject is defined. It includes, therefore, but is not restricted to, that which is termed proposition in the nomenclature of logic. It embraces all varieties of rhetorical form by which a subject is indicated to the audience. An interrogative may be in rhetorical dialect the proposition of a sermon.

I. Upon this latitude in the signification of the term depends the answer to the first question which meets us in the discussion of the thing; namely, Is the statement of a proposition necessary to the completeness of a discourse? Let us understand clearly the limits of the question. It is not whether a point to be proved is essential in every discourse; it is not whether the most scholastic form of statement is necessary to the proposition; it is not whether any single form of statement should be invariable in the proposition. The only point of inquiry on which difference of opinion can exist is this, Should the subject of a sermon invariably be so stated as to make hearers sensible at the moment that the subject is defined?

In discussing this inquiry, I aim at three things. One is to establish the affirmative; another and more essential one is to illustrate the vitality which inheres

in this very brief fragment of a sermon; and the most essential of all is to vindicate that style of thinking in the pulpit to which a definite statement of propositions and divisions is a necessity. I say propositions and divisions, because the practical question covers both; and we shall avoid repetition by considering once for all those bearings of it which concern the style of thinking in the pulpit which divisions, as well as propositions, represent.

It may seem disproportionate to discuss in a succession of lectures a fragment of discourse which may occupy but a single line in the writing, and less than a breath in the delivery. But the disproportion is like that of treating by an octavo volume of medical discussions only the single topic of an organ of the body which you can hold in the palm of your hand. The proposition is to the discourse what the heart is to the physical system. The relation is organic. Because it is so, the question of statement or no statement can not be fairly dismissed as a question of form only. It is a question of the inner quality of preaching. Decide it in one way, and you decide in sympathy with shallow and effervescent preaching. Decide it otherwise, and you cultivate thoughtful, solid, elemental preaching. This will be obvious from a consideration of the following particulars.

1st, The oratorical instinct of a good speaker demands that he shall have a proposition. Expressed or latent, the proposition must exist. We acknowledge this in the demand which we make upon every speaker, that he shall "speak to the point." What point?

2d, The instinct of good hearing demands, on the same principle, that a speaker shall state his proposi-

tion. For what purpose does a speaker need to have a proposition for which the hearer does not also need the statement of the proposition? There is a hearing to the point, which is correlative to speaking to the point. The eye follows the arrow most easily if it sees the target.

3d, It lies especially in the nature of a spoken address that it needs a statement of the theme. If an essay written might dispense with this, not so a speech delivered. In hearing, do we not instinctively, and soon after the commencement of an address, ask ourselves, What would the speaker be at? what is the aim? where is the target? If it seems to be concealed, are we not restless till it is discovered? This mental experience of a hearer is only the silent demand made upon the preacher that he shall not only have a proposition, but shall announce it. The instinct of hearing and the instinct of speech, in this respect, are of one mind.

4th, The popular mind is peculiarly dependent on knowledge of the theme as an aid to unity of impression. Performers on the tight-rope steady their whole muscular system by fixing the eye intently on a point in the distance. Thus they cross a ravine where the wavering of the eye might be death. Not unlike this is the mental effort by which the common mind must often follow the mental operations of its superior. The knowledge of the subject at the outset will be to the power of attention what the fixed eye is to the muscles of the gymnast.

5th, The subjects of the pulpit are in their nature liable to confusion in the popular conceptions of them. At this point the inquiry before us ceases to be a question of forms: it deepens into a question of things.

Let the following particulars be observed, in the way of *excursus* from the question of form into the thing which it represents.

(1) The common mind is burdened with the sense of sameness in the discourses of the pulpit. No other criticism of the pulpit is so common as this, "The preacher repeats himself. He is for ever reiterating the old story." This does not always imply fault in the preacher. Hearers judge of sermons by their own consciousness of the effect of sermons. Sameness of effect is often, in their judgment, equivalent to sameness in materials. If the shot fall fast and long in one spot, they lose the sense of succession in the sense of continuity. The tendency, therefore, is to a fusion of the popular conceptions of truth. Such fusion is confusion. Thoughts on religious themes run together, and themes themselves are blended in the popular theology.

(2) The tendency to confusion of religious thought often increases with the excitement of religious emotions. Nothing in the nature of religious sensibility protects it from that law of mind by which thought and emotion are often in inverse proportion. Hence revivals of religion are in one aspect occasions of unusual peril to religious character. This is especially true, if revivals occur under the lead of uneducated or incautious preachers. President Edwards thought it necessary to publish his work on "The Religious Affections," as a corrective of errors, and a protection against dangers, into which the churches of New England were falling. Such errors and dangers were involved in an indiscriminate interest in religion, arising from the disproportion between emotive excitement and thoughtful convictions in the experience of converts. Audiences

which Whitefield addressed were sometimes swayed by the mere infection of sympathy to the very circumference of the twenty thousand in the field, when it was physically impossible, in the case of thousands, that they should have heard one word from the preacher's voice.

Hume relates, that he was present on one such occasion, when the audience was so immense and so restless, that no human voice could have been intelligibly heard by them all. He wandered to the outskirts of the crowd in amazement at the evidences of emotion which met him at every step. He paused at length by the side of a woman who was weeping piteously, and inquired, "My good woman, what are you crying for?" — "O sir! for the parson's sermon." — "But can you hear what the parson is saying?" — "No, sir." — "Have you heard any thing since he began?" — "No, sir." — "Pray tell me, then, what for do you cry?" — "O sir! don't you see that holy wag of his head?"

(3) One part of the mission of the pulpit, therefore, must be to divide and define and identify religious thought in the popular experience. Preaching ought to educate the religious sensibilities of the people, as well as to stimulate them. You perform a work of questionable usefulness, if you only awaken those sensibilities, and then leave them to take care of themselves. They will crystallize about something; and if you do not furnish the right thing, error, weakness, depravity, and Satan will always be at hand with the wrong thing. Preaching ought to break up the conglomerate in which thought and feeling, error and truth, spiritual power and animal magnetism, divine suggestion and Satanic temptation lie molten together. Men need to be taught by the pulpit to know what they believe, and why they feel, what emotions are

legitimate to one truth, and what to another, and why they differ. Truths need to be individualized by analytic preaching. Only thus can the popular experience of them be deepened by discriminating knowledge.

It deserves to be noticed here, that, in our own day, there is comparatively little questioning of the spirit of revivals. The pulpit commonly welcomes them, and assumes that they are the work of God. To doubt this, and to express that doubt, expose a pastor to suspicion of his consecration to the Lord's work. Sometimes pastors find themselves borne along by a tide of popular feeling, of the purity of which they entertain serious doubts. They see evils which they dare not condemn, lest they should be thought to be opposers of revivals and of the men who are their conspicuous leaders. They see converts but half converted, men coming into the Church with false or infirm ideas of sin and regeneration and atonement. President Edwards did a courageous thing, when, as an antidote to the very same class of evils which we often witness, he published his work on "The Religious Affections." When has a similar work appeared in our day? Many pastors who have attempted to apply similar correctives of popular excitement from their pulpits have met with the rebukes of evangelists, and have been silenced by their misguided people.

It is one of the perils of evangelism, which requires skill and courage in the encounter, that the conspicuous instruments of a revival originated under such instrumentalities do not and can not apply the educating influences which every revival creates the need of. I say can not, because the educating work is a work of time. That work is turned over to the hands of pastors: it is a work not of stimulation, but of discipline;

not of emotion, but chiefly of instruction, — a work unsupported by the sympathy of large assemblies, the novelty of strange voices, and the *éclat* of special measures. Thus it often subjects pastors to the severest trials of their patience and their faith. Foresight of this after-work following a religious excitement produced by other agencies than that of the settled pastor should always be taken into account in deciding upon the expediency of importing evangelistic labor as an aid to the permanent pulpit.

Yet very many of the dangers of this class may be avoided, or at least safely encountered, if the work of the permanent pulpit is what it ought to be in point of instructive and discriminate preaching. To a people thus trained under an educating pulpit, revivals of religion may come and go as the most natural process of religious experience, creating no morbid excitement, and leaving behind them no perils to be feared, and no evils to be corrected. They may be as natural as the tides, — themselves a purifying agency, instead of needing, as actual revivals often do, to be themselves purified. To a people educated by such a ministry, evangelists may come and go as auxiliaries, instead of revolutionists.

6th, Returning, now, to the question of rhetorical form immediately before us, I remark with emphasis, the fact, that, to achieve this education of a people, preaching must use freely the expedients by which a logical mind naturally makes itself understood in the expression of strong thought on great themes. We must generalize less, and analyze more; exhort less, and argue more. We must divide and isolate, and specify and concentrate our most profound conceptions of elemental truths. That kind of preaching to which

a free use of the expedients of logical expression is a necessity is the only preaching by which the pulpit can accomplish its work as an educating power.

Therefore preach very little in the general, and very much in the detail. Preach little on truth, and much on truths. Preach rarely on religion, but constantly on the facts, the doctrines, the duties, the precepts, the privileges, of religion. Divide, discriminate, define, sharpen, clarify, doctrine by doctrine, duty by duty, fact by fact, till the whole map of Christian faith is outlined and clear. You thus gain the power of pointed preaching. Thought will take the precedence of feeling, and intelligent action will be the resultant of both. The final product which you accumulate and build up will be not beliefs alone, not sensibilities alone, but character in those forms in which character is power. Your church will become to the religious world what any other body of men of character is to the secular world, — a consolidation of forces, and a power of control.

7th, The use of that class of expedients to which definite propositions belong, and of that kind of preaching to which they are a necessity, tends to form and consolidate the theological faith of a people. This illustrates in another aspect what I mean in saying, that, in some relations of it, the question ceases to be one of forms, and becomes one of things. Dr. Lyman Beecher accomplished more for the evangelical faith in Boston by his bony sermons than by all other expedients of his pulpit. They were not graceful discourses; they were not literary discourses; they were not classically finished discourses (they would have been improved if they had been all these); but they were definite discourses. They reined up hearers to specific think

ing. They made them see that the preacher was aiming at something. It was impossible to mistake what and where the target was. In this respect his sermons were in striking contrast with those of his opponents, whose antipathy to an angular theology expressed itself in smooth and rounded rhetoric, which presented to the popular conscience no protuberances of thought, no points of convergent force, and therefore no centers of burning power. The fruits of the two methods of preaching have entered into the history of New England, and are known and read of all men.

The question, then, of the formal statement of the themes and the salient thoughts of sermons, is not a question of taste only. Still less is it a question of forms only. It affects vitally a policy of thought; and its decision is an index of a policy in preaching, upon which success depends. To achieve that success, you must have constructive methods; for constructive methods, you must have a positive faith; and for a positive faith, you must have centers of discussion which shall be visible. To make these centers visible, you must make them luminous; to make them luminous, you must have definite statements of them which shall penetrate the understanding, and remain in the memory. In no other way can you get possession of available forces with which to work upon the popular life.

All this comes by intuition to a live man who understands his mission in the pulpit. Yet even such a man may hang a mill-stone around his own neck by cultivating an antipathy to the natural forms of logic in the construction of discourses for the pulpit. By banishing those forms from his sermons, he may banish the things they express; and then strong, positive, argumentative preaching is no longer possible. This is one of the

things of which you must have the forms, or, in the long run, you can not have the things.

8th, Yet the best analytic methods of sermonizing will sometimes fail to define truth in the popular theology. The perils of the pulpit in this respect are nearly all on one side. A hundred sermons fall still-born from the pulpit because of their pointless structure, where one repels hearers by excess of angularity. That is sure to be a still-birth which produces a body without *vertebræ*. Life must have an osseous framework.

You will very soon begin to observe, in remarking the effects of sermons upon your audiences, that a structure which seems needlessly formal to you often is not so to them. Not only will you discover that subjects which you have tried to express by hint, by covert announcement, by silent inference from a text, are not detected by your hearers; but subjects which to you are as positive as a triangle in their statements, some of your hearers will misunderstand. They will suppose you to be preaching on the omnipotence of God, when, in fact, you are discoursing upon his sovereignty. They will be thinking of the degree of depravity while you are describing its extent. You will preach upon Christ's work of intercession, and some of your hearers will advance no nearer to your thought than to imagine that they have heard a sermon on prayer. You will be praised or censured for sermons which you never preached. You will be invited to repeat, and asked to publish, discourses of which you never heard. Some hearers will label a sermon with a theme derived from a single division of it, from a paragraph, from an illustration, from an application.

But is not this view contradictory to an opposite

view, which has been as positively expressed? I affirm the confusion of religious ideas among the people, yet I have claimed for the popular mind great keenness of intelligence. Is not this a contradiction? I answer, No. It is a brace of opposites. Any practical art, when reduced to its ultimate facts, must involve many such paradoxes. The popular mind is both intelligent and ignorant. The same individual mind may be both. The masses of men have sagacity without culture. Whatever intuition can teach them, they see with the eye of an eagle. But whatever depends on mental training, they need to be taught line upon line, precept upon precept. They will appreciate keen distinctions, if you once make those distinctions palpable. Gain attention to them, and assent is swift. But the multitude do not originate distinctions nicely. Therefore they need statements made for them, and so made as to command their understanding.

9th, Looking, now, for a few moments, away from the pulpit, we discover another illustration of the value of definite statements of themes, and of the style of thinking which such statements represent, in the importance attached to them in other departments of oratory. Out of the pulpit public speaking is commonly a business. It has an object in real life. Men are in earnest in it. Speakers speak for a purpose: hearers hear for a purpose. What, then, is the testimony of the senate and the bar on the question of the necessity of propositions? Why is a lawyer expected to state his case to a jury? Why must a senator speak to a motion, upon a resolution, for or against a bill? Why is legislative business printed and circulated before it passes to a second reading? These expedients of legislative and forensic usage are among the equivalents of those helps to

precision which a preacher seeks in choosing texts, and stating themes, and announcing divisions of sermons.

The ablest forensic orators have aimed to give to statements of truth the force of arguments for those truths. Said the chief justice of New Hampshire, in commenting upon one of Daniel Webster's early efforts, "That young man's statement of his case was an unanswerable argument for its justice." The judge borrowed the criticism from Edmund Burke, who had said the same of Lord Mansfield. The main force of Mansfield's eloquence lay in this, — his power to pack into the lucidness of a statement the weight of invincible logic. The consequence was that the House of Lords paid greater deference to his speeches than to those of any other man in England. From Mansfield, Chief Justice Marshall derived the same taste for elaborated and finished statements. Says one critic, "Marshall's force lay in three things: first, he understood his own purpose secondly, he so stated it as to make a jury understand it; thirdly, he so stated it as to make them feel that neither they nor he had any concern with any thing else. For the time, the opposition was nowhere." This criticism suggests an admirable model for the statements of the themes of sermons.

Look over the ranks of eminent legal minds, and you will observe, that, almost without exception, those who command the position they hold, and hold the position they choose, are men of this type of intellectual force. Their productions when analyzed exhibit a polished compactness in the expression of vital truths which gives to mere statement literally the force of a syllogism. Their propositions are proofs. They prepossess conviction. We accept the statement, and say, "What is there here to argue about?"

A notable instance of this axiomatic style of statement, which carries its demonstration on the face of it, is found in the title of Dr. Bushnell's work on female suffrage, "The Reform against Nature." Nothing else could be so perfect, nothing else so unanswerable. The verbiage and the sophistry with which the press is deluged on that subject are rebuffed by that compression of the whole case into one idea in four words. We speak of truth in a nutshell: this is truth in a bombshell. Such a proposition is worth any volume which can be written on the subject. Half the work of constructing the book was finished in the invention of the title.

For the reasons which have now been given, the principle, I think, will be admitted, that a proposition, and a proposition studied, and a proposition stated, and often a proposition finished in elaborate and compact form, is a very vital part of pulpit discourse. Though but a fragment in form, it is an index to the whole style of thinking which underlies the form. Without it, the most valuable style of thinking is impracticable in the pulpit; and with it, all styles may be at command.

LECTURE XXI.

THE PROPOSITION: NECESSITY, SUBSTANCE.

II. THE views thus far presented suggest the further inquiry, in the second place, Does the necessity of a proposition in a sermon admit of exceptions?

1st, In answer let it be observed that some apparent exceptions are not real exceptions. Apparent exceptions occur in such cases as the following. One is where the theme of a sermon is naturally inferred from the occasion. A biographical discourse at a funeral may not require distinct announcement of its subject. Why? Because the audience already know what must be the center of thought in the sermon. The occasion is the proposition. There is an apparent exception where a subject of discourse has been announced by previous notice. An advertisement in a newspaper, or an announcement from the pulpit, may have anticipated the work of a proposition; so that to announce the theme may be unnaturally formal. Why? Only because such announcement would be a repetition where repetition is needless. A textual or an expository sermon may not need a distinct declaration that the text is the theme. Why? Because the explanation of the text may be so constructed that it shall be impossible for a hearer not to understand that the text is the center of interest. In a series of expository discourses,

formal statement of subject may be needless after the first discourse. Why? Because that first of the series has informed the audience, both of the subjects and of the method of discussion in the subsequent sermons.

These, you will perceive, are not real exceptions to the principle we have considered. But a class of discourses exist which are distinct from these, and which seem to involve the omission of a proposition. You say, and not unreasonably, "I do not wish always to disclose my object in a sermon till I reach its application to my hearers. How can I thus advance to my object under cover, if I must reveal every thing in a formal proposition? I must sometimes catch hearers with guile."

2d, This suggests the inquiry, Shall a proposition be omitted for the sake of politic concealment of the aim of a sermon? In answer let several facts be noted.

(1) In the first place, rhetorical concealment in the pulpit is itself exceptional. Preaching may, by the truthfulness of its character, venture upon an openness of policy which would not be wisdom of policy elsewhere. Diplomatic reserve of truth is the exception, not the rule, in the discourses of the pulpit. If it become the favorite art of a preacher, people distrust it, and are repelled. Dr. Emmons suffered in the estimation of some of his hearers by his fondness for concealed conclusions. The springing of a mine was his favorite symbol of the application of a sermon. His hearers used to say, "Beware of conceding the doctor's premises: nobody but he knows where he will lead you in the end." A Machiavellian reputation is not a desirable one in the pulpit. We want a docile, not a suspicious hearing. If, therefore, exception be made to the rule requiring a statement of proposition in a sermon

as an expedient of rhetorical policy, that exception should itself be rare.

(2) Concealment of an aim at the intellect of hearers is widely different from concealment of an appeal to their sensibilities. In the nature of the case, and therefore always, it is unphilosophical to announce an intention of appeal to the feelings. It is not in the nature of the case, and therefore it may never be as unphilosophical, to announce a design upon the convictions of men. Imagine a speaker, in the pulpit or out of it, saying to you, "Come now, I am about to excite your emotions: smile, weep, pity, fear, mourn, rejoice, with me." Imagine another saying, "Come, now, let us reason together. I wish to convince you: I propose to address your sober judgment: I ask you to hear my arguments: I hope to show you the truth of my conclusion." Is there no distinction between these two disclosures of rhetorical intent? Are we not repulsed by the one, when we should be attracted by the other? The one is a burlesque of oratory: the other may be its triumph.

The preacher may offend hearers by arrogance of manner in revealing the purpose to address their intellect. Said Luther, "I shall prove this doctrine so unanswerably, that any one of you who does not believe it will be damned." The repulsion here is caused by the dogmatic manner, not by the fact of disclosure. Intellect courts visible approach: sensibility evades such approach. Intellect is bold, and craves bold treatment. Sensibility is coy, and hides itself: it would be secretly won. This is human nature. We should never, therefore, carry over into the policy of treating the understanding the reserve which true policy requires in the treatment of the feelings. Each should

be managed according to its kind. A proposition for the intellect may be even the more necessary, because of a reserved aim at the sensibilities.

(3) Therefore the omission of all forms of proposition is not necessary, even when the application is concealed till the end. A proposition may involve your conclusion without stating it. Your proposition may announce a theme in the general: your conclusion may disclose a specific truth on that theme. Your proposition may be an interrogative: your conclusion may be its answer. Your proposition may ask attention to some thoughts suggested by the text: your conclusion may educe results which the hearers would not have tolerated at the outset.

Note a single illustration of one of these methods in which concealment is wisely practiced, yet in which a definite proposition is stated and held as a center of interest. The doctrine of eternal punishment is unpopular, we may suppose, among your hearers. You wish to preach it, yet would not arouse their prejudices needlessly. You therefore approach it gradually by a discussion which covers it from sight till your conclusion reveals it behind impregnable defenses. Must you withhold a proposition in order to do this? By no means. Adopt the text, "Are not my ways equal?" Announce as your proposition this, to consider some illustrations of the reasonableness of God's ways with men in certain things of which men often complain. This is a harmless statement, offensive to none, yet sufficiently definite to give to the intellect of hearers a center of attention and interest. You proceed to develop it by a cumulative series of remarks. You observe: 1. That God is reasonable in creating man without giving him a choice as to his own existence·

2. That God is reasonable in subjecting man to a government of law; 3. That God is reasonable in placing man on probation under law; 4. That God is reasonable in sustaining law by adequate sanction of which he only is the proper judge; 5. That God is reasonable in the reprieve of violators of law by a scheme of grace, of which, also, he alone can intelligently judge; 6. That God is reasonable in executing the sanctions of law against transgressors; 7. Especially is God reasonable in the punishment of sinners who have violated both law and grace.

In a cumulative discourse of this kind, your final object is reached by a gradual approach, which may be made to cover the whole of the popular objection to the doctrine of retribution. Yet a proposition is announced which conceals that final object till you are prepared to declare it advantageously. True, the proposition is not the most specific conceivable; but it is sufficiently so to answer the hearer's natural and irrepressible craving for a center of attention, and to be a protection against rambling thought. I repeat, therefore, it is not necessary to a politic concealment of the aim of a sermon that all form of proposition be withheld.

(4) To withhold all form of proposition is an impediment to the policy of concealment. To withhold a proposition implies an obvious concealment. The fact of concealment in discourse is a stroke of art. A disclosure of the fact that the drift of a discourse is concealed excites distrust. Our minds instinctively brace themselves against a hidden purpose on the part of a speaker, if the hint be given us that he has a hidden purpose. Therefore the perfection of art requires that the policy of concealment be itself concealed, and this demands that some form of propositi n

be announced as a center of interest to the mind of the hearer.

III. The third general topic in the discussion of propositions is the inquiry, What principles should regulate the substance of a proposition? The substance of a proposition may be regarded in three relations, — the relation of its elements to each other, the relation of the whole to the text, and the relation of the whole to the sermon.

1st, The elements of a proposition should be so related to each other, that they shall be susceptible of unity of discussion. No art requires oneness of character in its productions more imperatively than that of oratorical discourse. A good discourse is a structure, — one structure, a whole, not a congeries of alien particles.

(1) A sermon, therefore, comes under all the laws of unity which regulate discourse in other forms. As we have seen that nothing is a sermon which is not a structure, so every part of it, if perfectly formed, must be constructed. Every part gravitates to every other part. The demand for this grows out of the very nature of persuasive speech, and is inevitable in every mind. The demand is one which reason always makes upon reason. If not, why should incoherent speech be a sign of delirium?

(2) The foundation of unity of discourse must be laid in unity of proposition. The parts can not gravitate towards each other without resultant forces which meet in a center. The most vigorous elements in a sermon, if they have not the centripetal attraction, can only jostle and defeat each other. Thoughts let loose in speech, and left there, neutralize each other. The more powerful they are individually, the weaker they

are as a whole. The more intense the emotions in which they are draped, the more frigid is their effect upon intelligent purpose. Of such purpose they have none. They can move a hearer only to a state of bewilderment.

Hence it is, that, in the history of the pulpit, those discourses which commonly produce epileptic and cataleptic phenomena in the audience are rambling discourses. Thought without an aim, emotion without a purpose, stimulation of the sensibilities without intelligent gravitation to an object let loose upon feeble minds the most unmanageable tendencies to pathological distortion. A center of thought rigidly adhered to, even in the wildest of ranting discourse, would tend to preserve the mental balance of hearers by the mere conservatism of intellect in its control of feeling. Animal sensibilities can scarcely master a mind which is thinking intensely and consecutively to one point. Such a singleness of point in discourse is gained by a proposition. The first constructive idea we can form of a discourse must be an idea of its proposition, and that, as Vinet remarks, we always assume to have been one, and but one. We never ask what were the subjects. We assume unity, never plurality, unless we mean to burlesque a rambling speaker. The reason is that nature prompts us to seek the germ of a discourse in its proposition. Fénelon only expresses the same truth in another form, when he says, "The discourse is the proposition unfolded, and the proposition is the discourse condensed."

Another phenomenon which deserves notice is that, if the discourse has no unity of theme, a good hearer instinctively struggles to create it and insert it as the discourse proceeds. Something he must have to put

under the superstructure, and support its weight by some sort of logical form. We observe, therefore, one of the axioms of homiletics in the fact before us, — that the elements of a proposition must be so related to each other as to be susceptible of unity of discussion. A sermon may be devoid of unity, if a proposition is not; but it surely will be devoid of unity, if the proposition is.

(3) The inquiry arises here, Does not this requisition of unity of proposition restrict freedom of discourse? Not at all; for unity of proposition admits of every variety of discourse which has an object. It restrains only discourse at random. In illustration of this we must observe that unity itself admits of great diversity of kind. Vinet specifies twelve varieties of unity, giving rise to as many kinds of consecutive and intelligent discourse. The whole subject of unity is simplified by recalling the four radical varieties of composition by which we have classified sermons. Explanation, proof, illustration, persuasion, — this enumeration is exhaustive. A preacher who speaks with an object must do one or more of these four things, and only these. Observe, then, how the subject of unity in preaching clarifies itself by adjustment to these radical diversities of composition. From the nature of the case, there must be four fundamental varieties of unity in discourse, and therefore in propositions; and there can be no more. Let us note these varieties.

First, a proposition may admit of a logical unity of discourse. It may suggest a process of argument; and the discourse, if true to its object, will be an argumentative production. Its aim will be to prove one thing. But this logical unity is susceptible of very great diversity. One variety is that in which the object of

discourse is to consider the objections to a doctrine. Another variety is that in which a truth is proved, and inferences from it are considered. Again: unity of logical aim may be consistent with a consideration of truths mutually related. Still further: logical unity admits of a combination of truth with other processes as subordinates. Explanation may be a preliminary to the proof of a doctrine. The complications are innumerable in which a logical unity inheres in great diversity; yet in the proposition itself we detect perfect unity of aim.

Secondly, a proposition may be adjusted to a didactic unity of discourse. The aim of a discourse being explanation, not proof, that aim may be single; and, if the sermon obeys it, a perfect oneness will result in the whole structure. This didactic unity also may be unimpaired by variety in the elements of the proposition. Jeremy Taylor discourses upon "growth in grace, with its proper instruments and signs." Here one thing is treated in certain relations, and these relations introduce variety. Unity of aim is not impaired by plurality of elements. Again: the didactic, like the logical unity admits of the combination of topics mutually related. Bourdaloue preached upon "the severity and mildness of Christian law." This is a dual proposition, but dual only in form. Each of the two elements is the complement of the other, and therein consists the unity of theme. The didactic even exceeds the logical unity in the freedom it gives to the range of discourse. It admits of a union, in one proposition, of contrasted truths. Massillon treats in one sermon "the death of the sinner and the death of the righteous." Jeremy Taylor yokes into one proposition "lukewarmness and zeal." Antithetical propositions may be the most compact units. Antithesis is often intense in the singleness of its im-

pression. Lightning is never at other times so vivid as at midnight. Didactic unity without losing itself may subside into a textual unity. The singleness of a sermon must often consist in the preacher's fidelity to one text. For the inspired thought, either in its elements or its order, he is not responsible. A discourse is one if it develops fully the force of one text, and no more. Therefore a proposition is one, if it invites attention to the teachings of one text.

Thirdly, a proposition may be fitted to a picturesque unity of discourse. Did you never listen to a sermon of which the details would appear to a superficial criticism to be chaotic in their confusion, but which still left upon your mind a burning impression of one thing? Did it explain any thing? No. Did it prove any thing? No. But did it not intensify something? Was not the last charge you could bring against it that of talk at random? The sermon was illustrative. But what kind of unity had it, or could it have? Precisely the unity of a good painting. As in a painting variety of personage may exist, and lights and shadows, diversities of form and feature and drapery and attitude, even contrasts of coloring and expression and character, yet all may be grouped so as to be vividly one in design and in effect, so an illustrative sermon may admit of infinitely varied details with no loss of a genuine unity. It is not the unity of a dialectic or a didactic aim; but for immediate impression, especially upon the popular mind, it may be more intense than either. The effect may be like vision. The unpretending proposition may be to the hearing of the sermon what the optic nerve is to the brain.

Examples of this kind of unity are found in Jeremy Taylor's discourse on the "Apples of Sodom," and again

on "Doomsday-book," and in Professor Park's discourse on "the character of Judas," and again on "the character of Peter." Such sermons are pictures. We must look for the point of unity in them, as we look for the interpretation of a painting. Our eye must be adjusted to the right focus. We must judge as of perspective. Very many sermons which a mincing critic would condemn find the key to their structure in the single fact that they are rhetorical paintings. Their unity is æsthetic. It may be rather suggested than defined by very simple forms of proposition.

This picturesque unity of discourse, like the other forms of unity which have been named, is susceptible of variety in unity. Even the proposition of such a discourse may suggest such variety. Rev. Albert Barnes once preached on the "Life and Times of Isaiah." The unity of the structure was not impaired by representing the prophet thus as the central figure to be illustrated by his surroundings. Even contrast may be contained and expressed in such a proposition without loss to its unity. A discourse was once delivered on "a comparison of St. John in the Isle of Patmos, and Napoleon at St. Helena." The sermon was a series of contrasts between the two exiles, of which the proposition gave an unmistakable hint. True, the statement of the theme of a picturesque discourse does not admit of as great variety in unity as that of a didactic or an argumentative sermon; but the difference is in statement only, not in the substance of the theme. All picturesque art is made up of hints of truth. More is meant than words define. It is not unbecoming, therefore, if the proposition of a picturesque discourse partakes of the same fragmentary character.

Fourthly, a proposition may be adjusted to a purely

oratorical unity of discourse. "The practice of religion enforced by reason" is the theme of one of Dr. South's sermons. What is the point of unity in this? Argument, explanation, illustration are found in the sermon, but as subordinate elements only. They do not express the aim of the sermon. Yet that is expressed in the proposition. The object is direct persuasion to a religious life. This is a purely oratorical aim. This kind of unity characterizes a very large class of discourses in the practice of the pulpit.

These four radical varieties of unity — the logical, the didactic, the picturesque, and the oratorical — are exhaustive of the analysis of unity in discourse. From the nature of rhetorical composition, it follows that these are the fundamental varieties, and that there can be no more. The entire question of unity of discourse, which often seems blindfold in rhetorical discussion, may be, in any case, determined by bringing the discourse to the test of the inquiry, Can its materials be all brought under the cover of a proposition, which, in any of these senses of the term, is one? On the other hand, the unity of a proposition may, in any case, be tested by the inquiry, Does it admit of a discussion which shall be, in any of these senses, one? All the freedom of range in discussion which is possible in speaking to a purpose may be illustrated in sermons constructed upon these models of oneness in proposition.

But it is often said, and truly, that all the materials of a sermon can not always be brought within the range of a unique proposition. A certain class of evangelists are never weary of decrying the scholastic training for the pulpit, because they claim that it binds the preacher by rules of unity which hamper freedom. "I want to let my tongue loose in preaching," says one of this class

of divines, "and say what comes to me: I must utter whatever the Holy Ghost shall put into my mouth."

(4) This leads us to observe that the great excellence of the scholastic requisition of unity in a proposition is that it does restrain heterogeneous discourse. That which "comes to me" should not be uttered, if it is nothing to the purpose. The Holy Spirit is the author of order, not of confusion. He no more prompts to disorderly, inconsecutive discourse, than he prompts to raving. If a preacher's materials can not be built into one kind of structure, for one purpose, they ought not to be thrust together at one delivery. Piling such materials in layers, and capping them with a text, and adding the appendage of an exhortation, does not make a sermon of them.

A preacher at court in the time of the Stuarts once proposed to consider as the theme of his sermon three things: "First, the justice of God; secondly, the mercy of God; thirdly, that the actions of princes are not to be inquired into." Here is juxtaposition of materials, but no possible unity. What one proposition could cover them? what one text? what one aim of applicatory discourse? It is an admirable test of the materials gathered for a projected sermon, to inquire, Can they all be compressed under the shelter of a proposition which shall have unity of substance? If not, they will make but a rambling or disjointed sermon. Like will produce its like. The unity of a sermon is to be provided for chiefly in the proposition. "Do not disturb the unity of military thought in Italy. One bad general is better than two good ones;" — so wrote Napoleon to the French Directory. The art of discourse requires that which is equivalent to unity of command in a campaign; that is, oneness of proposition.

2d, Having thus regarded the elements of a proposition in their relations to each other, it would be in place now to consider them in their relation, as a whole, to the text, observing as a second principle respecting the substance of the proposition, that it should be congruous with the text. It is an excellence peculiar to the themes of the pulpit, that they can be formed in keeping with inspired authorities. Proposition and text should sustain each other. If the proposition is the trunk from which the body of the sermon expands itself, the text is the root from which, in some sense, the proposition should grow. To avoid repetition, I refer you here to the discussion which we have already presented of the pertinency of the text. In the treatment of that theme the topic of congruity between text and proposition was sufficiently considered.

LECTURE XXII.

THE PROPOSITION: SUBSTANCE.

3D, We pass now to the relation of a proposition as a whole to the body of the sermon; observing as a third principle respecting the substance of the proposition, that it should be identical with the body of the sermon.

(1) A proposition should not comprise more material than can be impressively discussed in one sermon. The necessity of this caution will be seen from remarking, in the first place, the tendency of imperfectly disciplined minds to indulge in excessive latitude of subject. What is the result of such excessive propositions? Usually the discussion falls short of the proposition. Sometimes, however, the sermon is sacrificed to the preacher's strain to equal his proposition. It ceases to be a discourse: it becomes an abstract of a discourse. Elaborate it may be, but as a table of contents is elaborate. Arguments are stated which there is no time to amplify. Facts are affirmed which there is no room to prove; or proved, which there is no space to illustrate. Conclusions are reached logically which the bulk of the structure will not suffer to be impressed by any natural method of application. Inferences are named of which even the logical accuracy is not made obvious. The structure is not discourse: it is only a mammoth skeleton of discourse. Like Bun

yan's Apollyon, it "straddles over the whole breadth of the way."

In other cases, the result of excessive latitude of theme is the sacrifice of the vitality of the sermon by commonplace in details. Generalities in thought naturally take on hackneyed forms in style. These flow in monotonous succession, like the fall of a mill-stream. Weigh them down with a sympathetic delivery, and you will have the clerical humdrum in comical perfection. Hence have arisen dull, ponderous, indolent, corpulent bodies of divinity in sermons, which remind one of a child's first attempts at composition on duty, friendship, truth, education, industry, time, eternity. Such discourses are not necessarily an indication of a feeble or inactive intellect. They betoken only a mistake in rhetorical policy. The most mercurial minds may be cheated of all their originality of invention by the selection of one of these oceanic themes.

This leads us to observe, further, that restriction of subject assists the invention of original materials. A youthful writer is often led to the choice of an excessive bulk of substance, if he chooses it consciously, by the belief that vastness of subject will insure abundance of materials, and that for him, in his inexperience, it may be necessary in order to secure sufficiency of materials. Just the reverse of this is true in fact. If your inventive power is sluggish, restriction of theme will stimulate it: if it is active, restriction of theme will give it scope. Invention exercised on a restricted proposition is microscopic. It discovers much, which, in ranging over a broader surface, it would lose. It is penetrative. It goes in to the heart of a theme. The mind labors, if the expression may be allowed, perpendicularly, not horizontally, not

obliquely. The result of such labor is that kind of discussion which is the opposite of discursive. The sermon impresses a hearer with the conviction that the marrow of the subject has been reached. The preacher speaks from a full experience of its richness in his own mind. Such preaching seems inspired.

Observe a few illustrations of this stimulus to invention from restriction of theme. Do not certain packed propositions quicken your thinking upon them in the very hearing? Listen to Dr. South: "Religion is the best reason of State;" "Good intentions are no excuse for bad actions;" "Concealment of sin is no security to the sinner." Do not such aphoristic propositions invite thought? Hear Reinhard: "Faithfulness in present duty qualifies for higher functions;" "The instruments which God chooses are not such as man would have chosen;" "The temptations attending opportunities of doing good." Who does not feel that he could enjoy constructing a sermon on any one of these themes? The singleness of them is interesting: the compactness of them is quickening. Yet the whole of them, and as many more, have often been spread out sprawling, and with ample room to spare, in one flabby discourse on the Importance of Religion.

Moreover, restriction of subject has a tendency to freshen stale truths. "Go thy way for this time: when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee;" — a stale text is this. How shall we elude a stale sermon? Thousands of discourses have been preached from this text, on procrastination of repentance. Can we get any thing better from it? Study the text for a moment in its surroundings. From the context, it appears that Felix was deeply interested in St. Paul's preaching. What was it which attracted him so greatly at

the first? It was the "faith in Christ," we are told that is, it was the theory of the new religion. What was it in the second hearing which led the governor to give the polite rebuff to the Apostle? It was the preaching of "righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come." That is, when the preacher began to develop the practical bearings of Christianity upon certain sins of which Felix was notoriously guilty, then it was that the message was so coolly given, "Go thy way." Therefore we educe from the text this proposition, that "Men who are deeply interested in religion as a theory often revolt from it as an experience." Are not the stale text and the commonplace subject, by such restriction of range, freshened to the thought of both preacher and hearer?

This vitalizing of stale themes is one of the great arts of the pulpit. Avoid such themes we can not. Treat them in the rut of centuries of preaching we dare not. We must accept them for dead truths; and all the ingenuity of homiletic art, and the magnetic force and the prophetic inspiration of the preacher must be called into requisition to resuscitate them. We must brood over such subjects with the intensity of our own being, as the prophet stretched himself upon the dead body of the widow's child, till a new life is breathed into them. Any expedient which can assist that inspiration may be vital to our success. One such expedient is that of a retrenchment of theme for the sake of concentration of force.

Further: restriction of subject is of special value to the interest of doctrinal preaching. Doctrinal preaching and dull preaching are, in the popular estimate, synonymous. We deceive ourselves, if we charge the unpopularity of doctrinal sermons to the account of

depravity, and leave it there. The prime cause of the popular distaste for theological discussion in the pulpit is its want of certain elements which are essential to vivacity. Study the experience of the pulpit candidly, and you will discover that audiences will listen attentively to any thing which seems to them to be alive.

Why did such events as the burning of the "Lexington," the wreck of the "Arctic," the duel between the "Merrimack" and the "Monitor," and the conflagrations at Chicago and Boston start up all over the land discussions of the doctrine of a special Providence? Not only in pulpits and prayer-meetings, but in secular newspapers, in magazines, in railway-cars, in steamboats, at coroner's inquests, and at tea-tables, within three months after each of those events, men wrote and talked enough on the doctrine of Providence to make up the sermons of a lifetime. Goethe tells us that a similar state of things all over Europe followed the earthquake at Lisbon. Was it dull talking and stale reading? Did men go to sleep over it? Why not? Simply because it was religious doctrine born into real life, and reproduced in living speech. Men felt the need of it; and they gave and took it in the forms of real life. The same is true of any other doctrine. Make the doctrine live, and live men and women will accept it as their spiritual food. Truth or falsehood, it makes little difference. Any thing can obtain an interested hearing which has any mental oxygen in it.

Infidelity will outstrip orthodoxy in any community, sooner or later, if all the electric force seems to be given over to error, and truth has to bear all the dead and dying and decaying things of civilized life, and to struggle through the consequent mephitic vapors. Let the resources of learning, the courage of inquiry,

the energy of reform, a vitalized style be found in infidel literature, and there only, while the religious press falls behind and below in these tokens of mental quickening, and we must not croak over the degeneracy of the times, if truth goes under for a while, and error rides the wave. This world is, in the main, a living world. Life craves life. Thought runs to thought. Originality springs to greet originality. Awakened readers clamor for quickened authors. Live hearers will throng upon live speakers. The pulpit, in this respect, is subject to no hardship. It only comes under the common law of all living thought. The Holy Spirit does not work miracles to give success to dullness.

We must, therefore, meet fairly the question, How shall life be infused into doctrinal discussions? Many things are requisite, but at present we are concerned with one only. It is the rhetorical expedient of restricting the substance of the theme for the sake of stimulating the invention of the preacher. A standing grievance in the pulpit on this subject is that of attempting too much in one discourse. Rarely, if ever, should a standard doctrine of theology be presented entire in one sermon. What is the necessary effect of such crowding of material? Recall your own experience as listeners. Have you not heard sermons of this kind which were only synopses? They had not a fragment of any oratorical element in them. They were abstracts of theological treatises. A sermon, so called, was once preached in Boston, in which the nature, the necessity, the proofs, the extent, and the moral influences of the Atonement were all treated in succession. It was one of the most unimpressive discourses I ever heard, yet on a theme imperial in its grandeur. It was delivered

to a most listless handful of an audience. It fell like lead. No fault of the hearer was it, if he was neither sanctified nor converted by such a sermon. Preaching under such a load of subject is like swimming in a diving-bell. Such synopses of theology are not made for the pulpit any more than the diving-dress is made for speed.

If preachers should treat every other class of themes in this suffocating method, all preaching would soon become as lifeless and as unpopular as much of the so-called doctrinal preaching is to-day. On the other hand, if you will preach upon doctrines as you preach upon duties, by analyzing the themes in bulk, and retrenching the range of single topics, and thus securing opportunity to use your materials as you would use other means of moral impression, you will find no other themes of the pulpit so popular as the doctrines of the theological system. Dr. Griffin's most powerful discourses were doctrinal discussions. Look at the "Park-street Lectures," doctrinal sermons every one. They were so high-toned in their severity of legal preaching as to win for the junction of Tremont and Park Streets the nickname of "Brimstone Corner." Yet they were preached to crowded and entranced assemblies. Dr Nettleton's most popular sermons were upon "election" and "decrees."

Dr. Chalmers's sermons on depravity were delivered to enraptured crowds; and the few in the windows reported fragments to the multitude which filled the street below. One reason of the popularity of those discourses was that he threw aside the historic formulæ of the doctrine, and restricted attention in each sermon to one leading thought, repeating and reiterating that thought in such variety of rhetorical forms that his

cumbrous style was no impediment to its reception, but a help rather. It operated like a sledge-hammer to drive the matter home. The series numbers seventeen discourses. Listen to some of the propositions: "The Necessity of the Holy Spirit to give Effect to the Preaching of the Gospel;" "An Estimate of the Morality which is without Godliness;" "The Judgment of Men compared with the Judgment of God;" "The Folly of Men who measure Themselves by Themselves;" "The Affection of Moral Esteem towards God;" "The Power of the Gospel to dissolve the Enmity of the Heart against God."

Compare these propositions with the stereotyped method of discussing the doctrine of depravity. They could all of them, and several more, be compressed into a sermon in which a preacher should announce as his subject the doctrine of total depravity. "First, what is not the true doctrine; secondly, what is the true doctrine; thirdly, biblical proofs of the doctrine; fourthly, the evidences of the doctrine from reason and from experience; fifthly, applicatory inferences and remarks." Hearers of such a sermon would retire, — the pious hearers silent, or wishing, for their children's sake, that they could have more "practical" preaching, and the profane hearers grumbling, or scoffing at antiquated theology. Chalmers, on the other hand, sent home his hearers of both classes delighted with the attractiveness, and impressed with the power, of the same theology, even in the forms of Scotch Calvinism. His power to do this was due, in part, to his taking time to do it, and concentrating his invention on fragments of the truth, instead of massing the whole in one unwieldy and indigestible bulk.

Preach by the scholastic model, and you doom your-

self to drudgery, and your hearers to somnolence. Preach by the (if I may coin the word) Chalmerian model, and, with precisely the same ultimate materials, you become a genius to your hearers for your originality, and they become converts at your will. The distinction between doctrinal and practical sermons, by which the one is the synonym of dullness and the other of life, vanishes. Both are alive, because you give yourself room to put life into them.

The principle advocated in these remarks suggests the inquiry whether the more comprehensive method of discussion is ever expedient in the pulpit. This leads me to observe that comprehensive themes may sometimes be demanded by speciality of occasion. The discourse for which Rev. Albert Barnes was first arraigned for heresy before the Presbyterian courts was upon substantially the whole system of the gospel. It was entitled "The Way of Salvation." Its object was to present in a single bird's-eye view the whole plan of God in saving men. That sermon he afterwards amplified into thirty-six discourses, which he published as a volume of nearly five hundred pages.

In like manner any preacher may find special occasion for presenting an entire doctrine, or even a group of kindred doctrines, in one sermon. One may wish to run over the keys of all those doctrines which appeal to fear, for the sake of showing the legitimacy of that emotion in religious experience. Occasionally, to show that a doctrine is one of a group of doctrines, and that, without it, the symmetry of divine truth would be defective, may be a valuable work. One of the most convincing proofs of the truth of eternal punishment, to thoughtful inquirers, is the fact of the necessity of it to a certain balance with other truths of divine revela-

tion. Depravity, Regeneration, Atonement, and Eternal Retribution form a quadrilateral system of theology. No one of them can be obliterated without loss to the rest. They are in keeping with each other. The intensity of each requires the intensity of the others to preserve an equilibrium of moral impression. To show that an endless retribution is one of such a fourfold group of truths may be, to a certain class of thinkers, the only decisive proof of its reality.

All such examples are exceptional. They are justified, if at all, by some speciality of aim. They are not thorough discussions of all the truth presented. They would have no moral force if they were the common product of the pulpit. They need to be preceded and followed by more analytic discussions requiring restriction of theme.

(2) Passing now from the topic of retrenchment of proposition, let us observe further, that the substance of a proposition should not comprise less material than is sufficient for impressive discussion in one sermon. A theme of discourse may be diminutive in itself considered. A German preacher once discoursed on the best method of manufacturing vinegar. Another preached on benevolence in the care of bees. A pastor in Massachusetts preached on the sin of raising apples for cider; another, on the evil of lounging on the doorsteps of the church during the intermission of divine service on the Sabbath. A preacher in New Jersey preached on the marriage of Adam. Each of these subjects, except the first, had a religious or a moral idea as its basis. Even upon the first, a useful, though acid, discourse might be delivered. Yet it is obvious that intrinsically they are puny themes. A preacher's mind is in a molecular mood in selecting such themes. They

are scarcely crumbs from a Master's table. Yet in more doubtful cases a discussion may suffer from excessive restriction of subject. A subject is to be suspected of this defect, if, in planning a discourse upon it. you find yourself straining to dignify it by force of style. A good subject sustains the style, not the style the subject.

Again: a theme may be diminutive relatively to the materials amassed for its discussion. It was a mark of prolific genius that Cowper could evolve so long and so rich a poem as "The Task," and one which entered at once into the rank of the standards of the language, from the subject of "A Sofa," accidentally suggested to him by Mrs. Unwin. Yet such productions are unnatural structures. They build materials in unnatural proportions. They are pyramids on apexes. They do not grow out of a symmetrical taste. To such a taste it is no defense of a diminutive subject to say that it has remote and underground connections with themes the noblest and most profound. All thought has such connections. But the highest inventive power will not, therefore, exhaust itself by choosing diminutive centers of thought. An Indian tobacco-sign has remote resemblance to the anatomy and muscular development of a man. But an artist does not, for that reason, choose it as his model of an Apollo. Nothing is greatest which is eccentric. Michael Angelo is said to have abandoned painting on canvas, because of his disgust at the pettiness of it as compared with painting in fresco. Fresco-painting, he said, was the art for heroes, because no other gave scope to the execution of great designs. So genius in literature craves a certain naturalness of things to things in its productions. On this principle perfect discourse demands naturalness of materials to

subject in this element of size. That can not be a comely structure in which immense or profound thought hangs as a pendant to a proposition of which the first and the last impression is trivial.

Further: a theme of discourse may be diminutive relatively to the dignity of the pulpit. Not every useful theme is sufficiently useful to deserve a place in the pulpit. Not every useful theme is religious enough for the pulpit. Not every religious theme is important enough for the pulpit. No other spot on earth is so environed by associations of dignity as a Christian pulpit. Its subjects should bear proportions to such associations. The popular instinct, which prompts a man to lift his hat on entering a place of worship, should be honored by a preacher in the selection of a subject of discourse which deserves such an act of popular reverence. We need something of the character of command in the proposition of a sermon. The first impression of it, and the last, and the dignity of it, therefore, in the memory, should be such as to sustain the pulpit in its appeal to the reverence of men. For this end a certain bulk of substance is essential. We should often inquire whether a restricted theme is not more properly a division than a proposition. That which is necessary as a division, or valuable as an application, may have no such commanding importance as to be worthy of a place at the head of a sermon.

Yet again: a theme of discourse may be diminutive relatively to the claims of other subjects upon the pulpit. Time in the pulpit is invaluable. No preacher can afford to squander an hour of it. The vital, the necessary, the imperial topics of homiletic discussion are more in number than the opportunities of preaching in any one lifetime. Multitudes of such themes throng

every pulpit. Great themes are always waiting for a hearing. Young preachers sometimes fear a dearth of subjects in looking forward to a life's work. That is the last thing you need to fear, if you are studious preachers. Dr. Archibald Alexander is reported, though I doubt the fact, to have advised a young minister, that, when he had exhausted his stock of subjects, he could always "pitch into Romanism." Never was advice more useless. "Pitch into" your Bibles, rather, would I say. Keep a commonplace book of fertile texts and suggestive themes, and you will find that no other inventory of your intellectual property will crowd your pulpit so soon or so hopelessly. Your despair will soon be, not "What shall I preach?" but "What may I omit in preaching?" Ten subjects for one which you can find time and place for in your preaching will you accumulate in your inventory. Select, then, the choice themes of discussion, and only those. Of important themes, choose the most important. Of prolific themes, give place to the most prolific. Deal only with superlatives. Accept only the aristocracy of thought. Apply mercilessly the law of natural selection. Let only that live which must live.

The Rev. James Alexander says on this subject, "I am impressed with the importance of choosing great subjects for sermons. . . . They should be the great themes which have agitated the world, which we should like to have settled before we die, which we should ask an Apostle about if he were here. They are to general Scripture truth what great mountains are to geography. . . . A man should begin early with great subjects. An athlete gains might only by great exertions." In this view of the matter, then, it is clear that no pulpit

has room for diminutive propositions. We should not be deterred from the adoption of this policy by the fact that the great themes are the hackneyed themes of the pulpit. They doubtless are such. This is an inevitable evil which must be met, but it is less than it seems. The great subjects are not the same to any two minds. No two preachers would treat them alike, unless one or both should borrow. The range of suggestion of a great theme is immeasurable. The opportunity for versatile treatment is immense.

Mark the analogy of the work of the pulpit in this respect with other great arts. The great sculptors and painters have chosen the same scenes and characters. Their fame rests, for the most part, on a few great subjects; yet no two productions are alike. Go through the galleries of Italy, and you will find that the really great works of painting and sculpture are on very few subjects, and these often repeated. So the great tragedies of the drama revolve in dramatic passion a few great ideas. From Æschylus and Sophocles downward, the greatness of the drama has not consisted in the multitude of its ideas. Shakespeare originated but very few plots. He elaborated those which had already proved their power over the human sympathies. The same principle holds good in preaching. The great subjects, though few, never lose their power if treated by a fresh mind. The need of them never grows old. Put your soul into them, and they are always fresh.

Further: a theme of discourse may be diminutive relatively to symmetry of impression. Some propositions it is not safe to divide, and discuss on different occasions. The objections to a doctrine may be in themselves an ample subject for one sermon; but it might be unwise to construct a discourse of such

materials, reserving the answer to a subsequent time. This experiment was once tried by a preacher to the students of a New England college. In the morning he delivered a sermon composed almost wholly of objections to a certain doctrine, and gave notice that he would answer them in the afternoon. He laid out his strength upon an effort of candor; stated the skeptical argument in full, as if he were himself the skeptic; and ended in the triumphant consciousness that he would demolish the whole structure in a few hours. The students enjoyed the skeptical preacher hugely. The afternoon came, and with it a furious thunderstorm while the church-bells were ringing. Very few students were present; and the preacher had the credit of having delivered an unanswered, if not unanswerable argument against his own faith.

Again: certain subjects contain opposite elements of impression which symmetry may forbid us to sunder. They lie over against each other. They are fortresses which have an outlook to the east and to the west. One of such twin doctrines discussed alone may not be truthful. As the human body has double brains, so the human mind has affinities for these double truths. In some connections, to separate them is like looking at one only of the two sections of a stereoscopic picture. Finally: the force of cumulative arguments may be weakened by dismemberment. Cumulative argument depends on continuity of impression. Separate the links of the chain and the magnetic accumulation of impression is impracticable: cumulation demands unity.

LECTURE XXIII.

THE PROPOSITION: SUBSTANCE, FORMS.

LET the suggestions of the last lecture concerning the relation of a proposition to the sermon be now applied by observing certain indecisive reasons for retrenchment. We often meet with inducements to frame a restricted proposition, which may, but which may not, be good reasons for such a policy. All that can be said of them, in general, is that they are not conclusive.

One of these indecisive reasons is fruitfulness of theme. We may be beguiled into the policy of restriction by the excitement of composition. Under that excitement a subject opens luxuriantly. In the midst of the discussion we may seem to be more distant from the end than at the beginning. A traveler never seems to himself so far away from everywhere as when he is in mid-ocean in a gale. Fruitfulness of theme may be good reason for retrenchment; but it may not. Do not trust implicity to the glow of composition. Your original survey of the subject in a calmer mood may be the more trustworthy.

For the same reason, convenience in composition is no conclusive defense of a restricted theme. This will often tempt you. You will state a subject in its fullness; but you will often find that composing is unexpectedly easy in the first half of the discourse. You

come upon a ledge of soft stone in the quarry; you prefer to work it for the ease of the working. Hence you fall back, and retrench your proposition. In the majority of such cases the restrictive policy for such a reason is unwise. The original bulk of subject, treated by a wise selection from the superabundant materials, and packed well into one sermon, would do more execution at the time, and would live longer in the memory of hearers, than if it were bisected, and expanded into the double sermon which has been so common in the history of the American pulpit. The soft ledge in the quarry is probably not the most desirable materia. with which to build. Select materials from a full mind are the ideal matter for a sermon.

Another inconclusive argument for retrenching a proposition is the desire to exhaust the subject proposed. The idea of exhausting a subject as distinct from a proposition we must often abandon. Some subjects we can not exhaust. The best subjects we can not exhaust. Yet these are subjects which may require a large area of proposition to give even an impressive fragment of them. But some minds are so constructed, that they can not traverse a large area of material without losing all sense of its limitations, and therefore they ramble on indefinitely. Have you not found preachers and authors who never seem to know when to let go of a subject? They cling to it with a tenacity which is exhaustive to themselves, and afflictive to their hearers and readers. Such a mind was that of Dr. Owen. Such was that of Dr. Charnock. The English pulpit of their day was distinguished by nothing more generally than by pertinacity of discussion. The sermon which Baxter preached before King Charles II. could not have been recited in less than two hours.

Charnock's sermon on "the duty and reward of bounty to the poor" required three hours and a half. We must not feel obliged to hunt down a subject into all its possible lurking-places. In preaching, as in common life, it is the fool who is able to utter all his mind. Yet we must not, in order to escape this extreme, dwarf a proposition. Give to it its natural dimensions, and then expand the sermon to those, and with that be content.

(3) We have observed of the substance of the proposition, that it should not contain more material than can be well discussed in one sermon, and that it should not contain less material than is sufficient for impressive discussion in one sermon. These principles suggest a third, — that the proposition should not contain other material than that which is discussed in the sermon. An obvious yet not uncommon defect in sermons is that their propositions do not express the real topics of discourse. The proposition may promise one thing: the sermon may realize another. Three forms of this defect deserve notice. One is that in which the proposition does not even contain the subject of discourse. Want of accuracy in analysis of a subject, or heedlessness in its definition, may lead a preacher to announce as his theme that which he has no intention to discuss. This occurs more frequently than one would suppose it to be possible to an educated mind. You propose, for example, to treat of the privilege of fellowship with Christ; but in fact you treat of the duty of fellowship with Christ. What is the difference? It is the difference between an appeal to conscience and an appeal to the sense of liberty. This represents a considerable class of sermons, in which we make an unconscious transition from the higher plane of liberty

to the lower plane of law. Have you not been sensible of this in listening to sermons? A subject as stated has promised a cheering side of truth; as developed, it has insensibly veered around to the sterner side. Beginning with "may," it has ended with "must."

Another form of the defect before us is that in which the method of discussion promised in the proposition is not that realized in the development. One preacher proposes to consider the nature of repentance, but the thing he discusses is the duty of repenting. What is the fault? Not only is there here an unwarranted change of subject, but a necessary change of rhetorical character in the discussion. In discussing the nature of a thing, you must explain: in discussing the duty of the thing, you must either prove or persuade. These are very different rhetorical processes, — different to the extent of producing a radical difference of discourse. The difficulty originates in a want of a thorough digestion of the materials before the proposition is framed. The remedy lies in the construction of a well-framed plan of discourse at the outset. Keep always in mind that a proposition is a promise: it demands foresight of your means of payment.

A third variety of the defect under consideration is that in which the proposition suggests a different point of unity from that which the discourse develops. What is the point of unity in a discourse? It is that point to which all the impressions of the discourse converge. It corresponds to the hero of a drama or of an epic poem. It is to a sermon what Hamlet and Othello are to the tragedies which bear their names. Must a sermon have a point of unity? Yes, if well constructed. It lies in the nature of persuasive discourse. Such discourse is a structure; it must have an aim; that aim

must gather into itself all the forces of impression which the discourse creates. Must, then, the unity of a proposition and the unity of a discussion coincide? Certainly: there can be no perfect discourse without this coincidence. A proposition is but a figure-head to a sermon, if it does not suggest the true center of interest in the sermon.

Observe an illustration of this defect in secular literature. Shakespeare's "Julius Cæsar" has been censured by critics for its title, because Cæsar is not the central character of the drama. Brutus is its center of interest. Brutus gives unity to the plot. Around Brutus every other character and every event revolve. The intensity of the drama deepens with the development of the destiny of Brutus; and, when Brutus dies, nothing remains to sustain tragic impression. On this theory the title of the play should have been "Marcus Brutus." Dryden was so much impressed by the justice of this criticism, that he once edited the drama with an amended title: "Julius Cæsar, with the death of Brutus." This shows at least the need of identity between the center of interest in a work of art and the center expressed or hinted at in its title. The title should not look one way, and the work another. The same principle should regulate a proposition and its discussion in a persuasive discourse. The point of unity which the proposition suggests should be identical with that which the discourse develops.

The violation of this principle is often illustrated in sermons on the governmental theory of the Atonement. Discourses explaining and defending that theory are often framed upon some such propositions as these: "The Grounds of the Atonement of Christ;" "The Reasons for the Necessity of an Atonement;"

"Why is an Atonement necessary for the Pardon of Sin?" These forms of proposition, you will observe, are sweeping. They profess to cover the whole ground of the philosophy of the Atonement. Upon them, or their equivalents, hundreds of sermons have been preached, advancing the moral necessities of the universe under a government of law, as explanatory of the necessity and the fact of Christ's work in atoning for sin. What, now, is the defect in such propositions for such discourses? It is, as before, that proposition and sermon suggest different points of unity. Who knows that the governmental theory of the Atonement comprises all the grounds of it in the mind of God? Who can prove that it expresses, therefore, all the reasons for the necessity of the Atonement? Who can venture to affirm that it answers in full the question, "Why?" Who knows in full the reasons for the Atonement? Anybody can ask, but who can answer, the question "Why?" We know but in part: we see through a glass darkly. When we have traced the Atonement to the moral government of the universe, and that to the mind of God, we have followed the rivulet to the Amazon, and the Amazon to the sea, and we can go no further. We discern the coloring or the eddies of the stream a little distance from the shore, but beyond that we lose it in an infinite unknown. This example illustrates the importance of the defect we are considering, in its bearing upon some of the most critical discussions of the pulpit.

In judiciary decisions it is a standing principle never to anticipate a case, never to expand a principle beyond the necessities of the case in hand. Such should be the policy of the pulpit in the construction of propositions. Specify: specify: so far as the aim of the dis-

course admits, always specify. Propose no other than the thing to be realized. Volunteer nothing in the proposition which the sermon will not redeem. Meet in the proposition the exact demand of the discussion; no more, no less, no other.

IV. The fourth general topic in the discussion of propositions is that of their forms. In the treatment of this subject I must trust to your patience. The form of any thing in literature is a dry theme. Yet in practice you will find the form of the proposition to be a striking feature in the face of a sermon. It is not less significant in discourse than the nose is in the human countenance. Both are expressive of character. The principles of perfect form apply to propositions and divisions, to a great extent, alike. Therefore, although at present I shall speak mainly of propositions, in order to avoid repetition I shall sometimes illustrate by application of a principle to divisions.

1st, Let us, first, observe certain fundamental distinctions of form in the statement of propositions.

(1) Your collegiate studies have made you familiar with the distinction between logical and rhetorical propositions. A logical proposition affirms or denies. A rhetorical proposition states a subject for affirmation or denial. This, it should be remarked, is a distinction in form only. Any subject of discussion can be stated in either form. Still it is not, on this account, a matter of indifference which form of statement is selected. The foundation of the Hollis Professorship in Harvard College requires the incumbent to preach to the collegians on the divinity of Christ. The report was once current that the last occupant of the chair preached against the divinity of Christ. If he did so, the design of the founder was frustrated by so small a matter

as the difference between a rhetorical and a logical proposition.

(2) Logical propositions are distinguished as affirmative or negative in form. This, also, is a distinction in form only. You can state the same truth either by affirming it, or by denying its opposites. You may deny an error by affirming the opposite truth. Any logical truth can be clothed in either form. Yet often we may discern very positive rhetorical reasons for preferring one form to the other.

(3) Rhetorical propositions are distinguishable as declarative or interrogative in form. Dr. Barrow has a sermon on "the unsearchableness of God's judgments." Dr. Emmons proposes, as a theme of discourse, "to inquire whether the eternal foreknowledge of God is true, and how can it be true." It is not difficult to see that very significant reasons may exist for a choice between these two forms of statement.

(4) All the forms of proposition thus far defined may be further distinguished as simple, or complex, or plural forms of proposition. Dr. Bushnell has a sermon, the proposition of which is, "obligation to God is a privilege;" and another, the proposition of which is, "we require to be unsettled in life by many changes and interruptions of adversity in order to be most effectually loosened from our own evils, and prepared to the will and work of God;" and a third, the proposition of which is: "1. That we live under a cloud, and see God's way only by a dim light; 2. That God shines at all times above the cloud; 3. That this cloud of obscuration is finally to be cleared away." These are specimens of the simple and the complex and the plural propositions. A simple proposition mentions a subject only, with no appendage of relations. A com-

plex proposition pursues a subject into its relations, and yet retains singleness of form. A plural proposition specifies a group of topics which have unity of subject, but not unity of form. These are diversities in form only. In substance they may be interchanged.

(5) As the interchangeableness of propositions is a vital point, let me ask you to observe an illustration of it. For the sake of simplicity let us select the most trite of the themes of the pulpit, — that of repentance. Observe how the substance of one sermon can be put through all the forms of statement which have been defined. (*a*) You first announce as your theme the subject "Repentance." This is a rhetorical declarative proposition, the most general conceivable. Under it you can discuss any thing pertaining to repentance. (*b*) You inquire, Is it the duty of all men to repent? You thus obtain a rhetorical interrogative proposition. Yet you may array under it the very same materials as before. (*c*) You propose to show that it is the duty of all men to repent. With the same ideal as before, so far as the materials are concerned, you have now a logical affirmative proposition. (*d*) You declare as your theme, "No man can be exempted from the obligation to repent." You thus, with no necessary change of materials, exchange the affirmative for a negative logical proposition. (*e*) But we may suppose that the design of your discourse involves some consideration of the necessity of the Holy Spirit to induce repentance. You ask attention to repentance considered as the duty of man and the gift of God; or you propose the inquiry, Is repentance both a duty and a gift? or you affirm the fact, all men are under obligation to repent, notwithstanding their dependence on the Holy Spirit; or you deny the fact

that any man is exempt from obligation to repent, by the necessity of the influence of the Holy Ghost. By our hypothesis, there is no essential change in your ideal of what the sermon is to be; but, by variations in form of statement, you construct four varieties of complex proposition. One is declarative; one is interrogative; one is affirmative; one is negative; and all are complex in form. (*f*) But suppose, further, that the character of your audience seems to you to require the extreme of clearness in specification of theme. You therefore adopt none of the preceding forms of proposition. But you say, after the model which Dr. Emmons so often adopts, "I design in this discourse to establish three things: 1. That every man is under obligation to repent; 2. That every man is dependent on the Holy Spirit for repentance; 3. That obligation and dependence in the act of repenting are mutually consistent." Or you propose to prove negatively three things: "1. That no man can free himself from the duty of repentance; 2. That no man will repent while unregenerated by the Holy Ghost; 3. That duty and dependence in the matter of repenting are not contradictory." Or you propose to answer three inquiries: "1. Is the obligation to repent universal? 2. Is divine interposition indispensable to secure repentance? 3. Are dependence and obligation in repentance consonant with each other?" Or you suggest as the theme of remark three topics: "1. Man's responsibility for his own repentance; 2. Man's dependence on God for repentance; 3. The relation of repentance as a duty to repentance as a gift." By the supposition, your ideal of the discourse is still substantially unchanged. But, from variations in the form of statement, you obtain four additional varieties of

proposition. One is affirmative; one is negative; one is interrogative; one is declarative; and all are plural in form. Can you not conceive of precisely the same substance of discourse as coming under every one of these twelve varieties of form in proposition? Yet is it not plain that it would by no means be a matter of indifference which form should head the discussion?

(6) Yet it is necessary to remark, further, that a choice from among these fundamental varieties of proposition will not necessarily insure a perfect statement of a theme. In a good proposition every word is vital to the structure. The locality of every word is of moment to the whole. The relations of each word to every other, the collocation of words into clauses, the number of words, and the syntax of the whole are essential subjects of criticism in the construction. A proposition is the embodiment of emphasis: it is all emphatic. *Minutiæ* of style, therefore, must often be considered in its making, which criticism can not determine by rules laid down in advance. We must have the case in hand in order to frame the decision of taste. A preacher needs, therefore, that state of mental culture, and that degree of practice in stating themes of sermons, which shall enable him to frame his propositions with unconscious skill, as a good writer constructs all other composition. All that criticism can do in anticipation of the work is to observe, as we have now done, the fundamental varieties of form in propositions, and then to add certain general principles for the regulation of good taste in the choice from among them.

LECTURE XXIV.

THE PROPOSITION: SIMPLICITY.

2D, Having considered the fundamental distinctions of form in proposition, let us, in the second place, observe certain principles which should regulate their forms.

(1) The form of a proposition should be characterized by as great a degree of simplicity as is consistent with a full statement. The prime virtue in a perfect statement of any thing is its simplicity. In such a process we require nothing extraordinary, no ambitious strain of style, no imaginative garnish, no affectation of an excellence. The verdict of centuries upon the quality before us is packed into the formula of the oath administered by civilized courts to witnesses. Just such, also, is the character of a perfect proposition. We give a faultless description of it in saying it is a statement, a full statement, and nothing but a statement, of the thing in hand.

Notice, in the first place, that, in framing such a proposition, we must especially avoid words of unintelligible or doubtful meaning to the hearers. Among other words of this class may be specified the technical vocabulary of natural science. A college professor, in a discourse on "certain mineralogical illustrations of character," sacrificed classic English to the nomencla

ture of science in the structure of nearly all the statements of the divisions. They are these: 1. The transparent character; 2. The hydrophanous character; 3. The semitransparent character; 4. The translucent character; 5. The doubly-refracting character; 6. The phosphorescent character; 7. The dichroic character; 8. The chatoyant character; 9. The irised or pavonine character; 10. The opaque character. Scarcely one of these forms of statement, except the first, is intelligible outside of a mineralogical cabinet. A preacher should not be ashamed to confess the weakness of wishing to be understood. The best apology for the sermon in question — and the apology had some force — was that it was preached in a college chapel, to hearers who were daily frequenting the cabinet of minerals, and, therefore, by the majority of them, it was understood. It may be, that, before such an audience, its scientific labels gave piquancy to the train of thought. Still the dialect of preaching should be the dialect of literature as distinct from science. The taste of scholarship, not that of the laboratory or the museum, should control its diction. Such a taste will prescribe a simplicity which will eject from propositions and divisions every thing but the purest and simplest English.

On the same principle, we should also avoid in the structure of propositions an abstruse philosophical vocabulary. One offers as a proposition "the subjective ground of justification." The truth which he discusses is "faith considered as a condition of salvation." Why not call it so, and be understood? Another proposes to discourse upon the "ethical laws of Christianity." The subject turns out to be "the excellence of Christ's morality over that of other religions." Why not say this, and speak to the good sense of nine-tenths of the hearers?

A third indicates as his subject, "the norm of sanctification." This is getting into deeper water. The discussion resolves itself into an illustration of this principle, that "grace grows by exercise." Why not have the courage to accept this? It is a gem of a subject. What is added to it by starching the proposition to the primness and pedantry of a philosophical diction in which nobody recognizes the beautiful and friendly truth? If we must have the general rather than the more specific proposition, why talk of the "norm" of a thing, when we have such stanch old words as "law," and "rule," and "principle"? Even the derivatives "normal" and "abnormal" are barely tolerable in a popular dialect; but the root "norm" is an affectation of philosophical pedantry which old Roger Ascham would have flung from him as an "inkhorn term" which scholasticism had "caught by the tail."

Again: the principle before us should exclude from propositions many of the technical terms of theology A large proportion of theological technicalities will almost necessarily be unintelligible to some hearers, and of doubtful meaning to others. From time immemorial they have burdened the dialect of the pulpit. Especially in the statement of subjects, the dialect needed in the pulpit is not that of the university, but the cultured dialect of common life and common men. Some masters of language can do in speech what masters of painting do in colors, — make varieties illustrate each other. Rufus Choate could make the technicalities of law and of literature deepen and adorn the thoughts, which, for the most part, he expressed in language level to the minds of a miscellaneous jury. So there are princes of expression in the pulpit, who can make the technicalities of theology enrich the

materials of their sermons, and at the same time make the popular elements of their style illuminate and interpret those technicalities. The effect is that the hearer is sensible of a range of thought and style above his own use, yet not above his own comprehension. To the extent of a preacher's power to produce this illuminated compound of opposites in style, he may safely employ the dialect of theological schools. But, beyond the limit of that power, no man can hope to be understood in the use of that dialect, except by the rare audiences who have been trained by a quarter of a century of technically dogmatic preaching. The number of such audiences in our day may be reckoned on one's fingers.

Aside from such exceptions, the best general test by which to admit or to exclude the technical style of theology in framing the propositions of sermons is that of the degree of its assimilation to the language of the Scriptures. The sacred books of a reading nation become, almost of necessity, a literary standard to that nation. Thus the Scriptures have become throughout Christendom, so far as the people are permitted and taught to read them, a standard of literary intelligence. The vocabulary of the Scriptures forms the greater part of the vocabulary of such a people in all their expression of dignified thought. In biblical connections and for biblical uses the people understand words which they never use, and might never understand, in different connections. As a consequence, the religious vocabulary of a people, as in Great Britain and Germany and America, is by several degrees more elevated than their secular vocabulary.

At the same time, it is true that the Scriptures have given to theological science some of its most salient

phraseology. The scholastic theologian often finds, that, even for scientific use, he can not improve upon the style of the Bible. A preacher, therefore, will commonly be on safe ground, as it respects the intelligibility of his style to the people, if he employs in the construction of his propositions and divisions only those technicalities of theology which the Bible has originated, and omits those which are the pure product of the schools. On this principle, therefore, we do not scruple to employ such technicalities of theology as "redemption," "justification," "predestination," "foreknowledge," and similar terms which a Christianized people can not but understand.

But how stands the case with certain other technicalities of theology? Is it wise to propose as the theme of a sermon "the free moral agency of man"? I think not. Why? Because it is scholastic in its origin and in its associations; and its scholasticism is not relieved by any thing that the Bible has to say on the subject. What, then, can we substitute for it? Such a statement as this, — "man's responsibility for his own character." It is worthy of note, on all topics involving the question of freewill, that the Scriptures never directly discuss that question. They teach responsibility, and stop there. The rest is left to human consciousness. Ability, freedom, fate, necessity, — the whole group of topics with which philosophy in all ages has dealt so freely, — are not treated in the Bible. We may wisely follow its example in the selection and statement of the themes of sermons. We gain thus the advantage which the Bible gains by its policy, — the support of every man's consciousness. Responsibility every man feels conscious of: ability in certain connections no man feels conscious of. It matters little whether men

believe in their moral freedom or not: their consciousness of responsibility remains intact on either hypothesis. That is, men are conscious, not of ability directly, but of that which implies ability The policy of the inspired preachers is to throw the whole brunt of the question of ability upon the consciousness of responsibility Back of that they never go. Therefore I would never discuss directly the subject of moral freedom in the pulpit.

Is it desirable to propose as a subject "the doctrine of original sin," or "the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity"? I think not. This phraseology is the product of the school alone. Common usage has never adopted it: men never confess conviction of sin by the use of it. The Scriptures do not contain it, nor do they give any such prominence to the truth which the schoolmen convey by it as to have exalted and illuminated it in the intelligence of the people. What, then, can we substitute for it? Such a form of proposition as this, "the connection of the sinfulness of the race with the fall of Adam," or the inquiry, "How has the fall in Eden affected the character of mankind?" The subject as thus expressed is a biblical theme. It can be discussed, if need be, without reference to the historic controversies on the subject.

The same principle should be applied to the phrase "total depravity" and to that of "the trinity of persons in the Godhead." Why is it, that if you adopt as the proposition of a sermon a statement containing the phrase "total depravity," or that of "three persons in the Godhead," you must exhaust one-half of your sermon to explain what the doctrine is not? This has become the stereotyped method of the pulpit of New England in discoursing on these doctrines, if

they are presented under the shelter of these technical statements. What, then, can we substitute for these scholastic statements of the doctrines? Such forms of proposition as these, that "man is by nature destitute of holiness;" or, "that the moral nature of man is sinful and only sinful;" or, "What is the natural character of man?" that "God exists as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost;" or, "that the Scriptures teach a threefold distinction in the being of God;" or, "What is the scriptural doctrine of the mode of divine existence?"

At this point should be noticed a peril to which preachers may expose themselves through inattention to the growth of certain forms of statement in their own minds. Statements may be obscure to hearers, which meditation has rendered elementary to preachers. Studious preachers are studious of truth in its philosophical relations. Themes of sermons, therefore, will often suggest themselves in a philosophical dialect. In that form their obscurity to hearers may escape the preacher's detection. Abstractions, to a mind which feeds upon them, become like concrete realities. But, for the purposes of discourse to an audience, there is great power and great beauty in calling things by their simple names. Call water, water, and fire, fire, remembering always that the first object of language is to be understood.

In the second place, the simplicity of propositions may be promoted by avoiding figurative forms of statement. We have before observed, that a proposition is a statement, and nothing more. If so, it is not an explanation, it is not an appeal, it is not an illustration, it is not primarily an argument: therefore the defect in a figurative proposition is that it is not the simplest form of statement. A figure may give clearness to an

explanation, force to an argument, vividness to an illustration, eloquence to an appeal, but not simplicity to a statement. It may therefore be more pertinent anywhere else in a sermon than in the statement of a proposition or division. Why is a metaphorical description of a crime not allowable in the enactment of criminal law? Why is a metaphorical boundary of real estate not pertinent in a title-deed? For a similar reason, figure is not becoming in a proposition. Literalness is essential to simplicity in any thing which professes to be a statement, and nothing more.

It has been sometimes advised that a proposition should be so framed as to be a good title to a sermon if it were printed. This is by no means a safe criterion. A good proposition, it is true, may be a good title; but a good title may not be a simple proposition. A title may be only a hint of the contents of a discourse: therefore it may be imaginative. The Rev. Nehemiah Adams, D.D., of Boston, delivered a sermon on the introduction of the Cochituate water into the city, and printed it under the beautifully significant title: "A Song of the Well." What would that title have been worth as a proposition? A metaphorical hint of a theme is not a simple statement of it.

Figurative propositions are sometimes vindicated on the ground of their biblical origin. Simeon, on the text, "I am the vine, ye are the branches," advances the proposition, "God's treatment of us as branches of the true vine;" and from the text, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to himself," he derives the proposition, "eating and drinking our damnation." These examples will recall to you a multitude of sermons in which the statements of the subjects embody biblical figures; such as "Baal,"

"Mammon," "the flesh," "the old man," and other scriptural modes of representing sin or its objects; and such as "Zion," "Israel," "Jerusalem," "The walls of Zion," and other scriptural modes of indicating the Church. Such figurative statements are not obsolescent in the modern pulpit. A discourse was preached within a few years on the subject of Samson's riddle, the divisions of which were: (1) There are lions in every man's path; 2. The slaying of these lions yields the sweetest rewards of life.

Is the argument for such propositions and divisions, that they are often founded upon figurative texts, an adequate defense of them? Surely not, if they are not intrinsically the best fitted to the purpose of a simple statement of the subjects of discourse. Why employ biblical poetry for a literal purpose, rather than any other poetry? The extreme of ill taste to which the usage exposes a preacher is illustrated in the following instance. A preacher in Massachusetts, a few years ago, wished to present the growth in a Christian character in its several phases from conversion to a mature Christian experience. He defined three phases, which he stated in his three divisions thus: 1. At the beginning of the Christian life we are all babes in Christ; 2. As we advance in experience we become young men, of whom the Apostle says "Ye are strong;" 3. In the final stages of our growth we all become mothers in Israel. What defect has this example which many others by more tasteful preachers have not in less degree?

Figurative propositions and divisions are often defended on the ground that the usage of the pulpit has indulged in them from time immemorial. They have, in the minds of some, the prestige of a venerable an-

tiquity. It is not always easy to reply to this saintly predilection for the antiquities of the pulpit. We should judge of it as men of sense rather than men of feeling. Remember that preaching is a business. Its object is an immediate object, a pressing object: it is the business of an emergency. Like any other such business, it can not be more fatally embarrassed than by wrapping it in the folds of romantic feeling.

Witness the unreal, often the dreamy, descriptions of Christian experience by Christian laymen who speak glibly in the use of biblical figures in meetings for prayer and conference. Why do they talk on religious subjects in a dialect the like of which they never use on any other subject? Why clothe religious thought in metaphorical forms such as they would never think of imitating in the concerns of business? One reason is that they take the infection from the pulpit. If preachers envelop religious ideas in figure, to the detriment of the business-like character of preaching, hearers will bury their own religious experience under the same verbiage; and how much of it is a reality and how much romance, they may never know. This preachers do when they put propositions into figurative forms. If any thing is a business in the pulpit, and ought to take on the forms of plain, business-like speech, it is that calm unpoetic part of a sermon in which a preacher has merely to tell an audience what he proposes to talk about. There, if nowhere else, we should come at the intelligence of hearers by the shortest, plainest, most natural, and hence most literal way. We should use the dialect of our own times, not that of Spenser or Chaucer, and as little that of Baxter and John Howe. Instead of seeking to throw around a proposition the drapery of a venerable homiletic usage, we should

rather think of the mathematical definition of a straight line.

Figurative propositions and divisions are sometimes vindicated on the ground of their raciness. One preacher, martial in his tastes, proposes as his theme "the great battle of the Lord Almighty." Another, in more feminine mood, proposes to contemplate "the rainbow of divine promise." A third, of more practical turn, asks attention to "the sin of being a stumbling-block." A fourth, whose tastes incline to science, suggests "the anæsthetic power of the world over Christian hearts." A fifth canvasses the signs of the times, and proposes "the pioneer character of the church." A sixth meditates at eventide, and invites to "a walk about Zion." These, and an interminable catalogue like them, many would defend as being pithy forms of statement. They prick curiosity: they please fancy. True; but does this shield them from the censure of good taste? I think not; because, valuable as raciness of statement often is, it ought not to take the precedence of simplicity. In stating any business in hand, raciness should be sought in plainness of speech and directness in coming to the point. Figurative hints are out of place.

The taste which chooses figurative propositions and divisions is perilous to chasteness of style in other respects. A writer is never safe who indulges himself in one habit hostile to good taste. A certain integrity characterizes the decisions of good taste. Joubert says that it is "the literary conscience of the soul." He that is guilty in one point is guilty in all. You can never know to what friskiness of rhetorical judgment you may be tempted, if you tolerate in yourself one habit of conscious indifference to the claims of taste, or a single recognition of eccentric standards of taste.

In the third place, the simplicity of propositions and divisions requires that they should not be stated in the language of popular proverbs. "Honesty is the best policy;" "A penny saved is a penny earned;" "God helps those who help themselves;" "In the midst of life we are in death;" — why should not these be made the propositions of sermons? Christian discourses might be constructed on any one of them. But, because they are familiar proverbs, they have an atmosphere about them which is not kindred to that of simple speech. They are the pert remarks of the highway. Their original dignity is gone, and now they are pedestrian and dusty. Often they are the make-weights of pleasantry. A suspicion of eccentricity is awakened by their obtrusion as propositions of sermons. Eccentricity is not simplicity.

In the fourth place, simplicity in propositions and divisions demands still more imperatively the exclusion of fantastic forms of statement. From the text in Ezekiel respecting "the wheels" and the "living creatures," one preacher derived the proposition, "the wheels of providence." The Rev. Parson Moody of Boston, on the text, "They know not what they do," preached on the proposition, "when men know not what to do, they should be careful not to do they know not what." On the text, "This year thou shalt die," a quaint preacher in Hopkinton, Mass., once discoursed on this proposition, "nobody in Hopkinton will die this year."

We feel without comment the unseemliness of these propositions. But why are they not good forms of statement? What canon or instinct of good taste do they offend? I answer, that which requires simplicity in the statement of a theme. Earnest minds, pressed

by the duty of the pulpit as that of an exigency, have neither time nor taste for the creation of such sports of ingenuity.

Finally, simplicity in propositions and divisions requires the avoidance of extreme paradox in their forms of statement. A slight paradox is not inconsistent with a calm statement, but an extreme paradox implies excited statement. Simeon has a sermon on "the mutual abhorrence of God and sinners." This is not true. It sets a thoughtful hearer to recalling the text, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Whitefield has a discourse on the proposition, "persecution is the lot of every Christian." Either this is not true, or the vast majority of the Christian Church are hypocrites. William Jay expresses the truth more simply when he proposes to consider that "a Christian is not apt to be a favorite with the world." The Rev. Dr. Bushnell has published a sermon, the proposition of which is, in substance, "men are bound to do what they can not do." This is not true in any sense in which the popular mind will understand the language. You must either make the language figurative, or put into it one of the technicalities of polemic theology to make it true in any sense.

Some of these examples of propositions will be vindicated by some preachers, on the ground that they are fair paraphrases of certain biblical texts. Thus, in the prophecy of Zechariah, it is said of God, "My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me." This certainly looks like "mutual abhorrence between God and sinners." Paul affirms, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." This appears to sustain Whitefield. Doubtless, texts enough can be

found in the Scriptures, which, when woven together with adroit theologic fingers, make out an express command to men to do what they can not do. Dr. Bushnell's use of his text to this effect is not without plausibility. The inquiry, then, is a fair one, — does not the objection which rhetoric urges against such propositions lie with equal force against these biblical texts? I answer, No: simply because texts are not necessarily absolute propositions. Texts are limited by other texts, interpreted by contexts, illumined by occasions and events, qualified by the characters concerned in their delivery. Isolate them, as propositions are isolated, from these interpretive surroundings, and often they are not true. Texts, therefore, are not inspired models of propositions.

One object of a proposition often is to reduce to a literal and independent statement the truth which a text presents half buried in intricate relations. To translate the poetry of a text into logical prose, to exchange the metaphor of a text for the literalism of science, to evolve the simplicity of a text from the labyrinth of its antecedents, to transport the germ of a text from an oriental to an occidental atmosphere, — these are often the very purposes of propositions. Simplicity requires them, as it requires that diamonds should be polished, not worn in the rough.

LECTURE XXV.

THE PROPOSITION: BREVITY, SPECIFICNESS, ELEGANCE, ITS PREFACE.

(2) PASSING now from simplicity in propositions, let us observe a second principle affecting their qualities; namely, that a proposition should be as brief as it may be, consistently with clearness. A French critic says that "genuine depth comes from concentrated ideas." So of propositions: the deepest, the truest, the most magnetic are susceptible of compactness in form.

In the first place, propositions are often expanded by needless synonyms. "The willfulness and perverseness of sin" is one of Dr. Payson's propositions. "The danger of obstinate and willful disobedience" is a theme proposed by Simeon. "The nature and design of a Christian Church" is a subject of one of Dr. Lathrop's sermons. What is the evil of these couples of words? They dilute the thought beyond the demand of perspicuity. Beyond this demand, words are a solvent of thought. The more, the weaker. We judge thought by weight, not by bulk. Again: needless synonyms may excite false expectations of the range of a discussion. "The willfulness and perverseness of sin" suggests, does it not, a double aim; yet the discussion has but one. From the nature of the case no words employed in a proposition can be

unimportant. Theoretically every word is emphatic. Practically every word will attract attention. With no theory of criticism on the subject, hearers will by instinct take every word as meaning something which can not be spared. Before using a word, therefore, in a proposition, find a use for it.

In the second place, we notice that the objections are similar to the expansion of propositions by needless epithets. "Man's proud contempt of God" is one of Simeon's subjects. What is the force of the epithet? What weight does it carry? Can contempt of God be otherwise than proud? Does the preacher mean to discuss different kinds of sinful contempt? If not, what is the purpose of the epithet? On the contrary, does not a nice discernment of good taste see a force in the substantive alone, from which the epithet makes a positive deduction? "Contempt of God" expresses more than "proud contempt of God." Compression itself gives force to thought, as it does to a bullet. Epithets, nevertheless, are sometimes necessary to strengthen a proposition. The vast majority of epithets used in propositions are designed to produce this intensive effect. Preachers employ them in the involuntary effort to intensify thought. The practical question, therefore, is when to use them, and when not. The discrimination of the preacher must answer. This may be assisted by observing three principles.

One is, that, if accuracy of statement requires an epithet, it is a necessity. Unqualified, the proposition may be untrue. Another principle is, that, if an epithet contains the characteristic idea of the sermon, it becomes a necessity to the proposition. "The greatest of these is charity;" — from this text, a sermon was once preached on "the incomparable excellence of love

Why was the epithet necessary? Because it contained the distinctive idea of the whole discussion. Such epithets are condensed sentences. They are the discourses in miniature. A third principle is that the proposition is not the place in which to intensify a subject merely for rhetorical impression. To do that may be the design of the development or of the conclusion; but the purposes of mere statement limit the aim of the proposition. "The horrible guilt of those who strengthen the hands of the wicked;" "The awful doom of the finally impenitent;" "The glorious rewards of the righteous,"— do you not perceive, that, in these examples, the epithets have no definitive value? They are inserted only to magnify the idea. The accuracy of the statement does not demand them, nor is the characteristic thought of the proposition in any one of them. They are like the lens of a magic-lantern, — inserted only to augment the diagram behind. The use of them indicates the straining of style to express on the instant and at first sight that which it is the province of the discussion to develop as an ultimate result. They put the whole structure out of true perspective.

Again: propositions may be needlessly expanded by circuitous or indolent grammatical constructions. Which of the two following forms of proposition is the more forcible? — "Let us consider the duty of believers to make incessant advances in holiness, notwithstanding the temptations of the world, the trials of Providence, and the assaults of Satan;" "Let us consider the duty of Christians to use the conditions of a probationary life as a means of growth in grace." For the purposes of a statement of theme, does not the latter of these forms express all that is requisite, and express it the more forcibly for its brevity?

Further: propositions may be needlessly diffuse through repetition in varied language. If any single sentence of a discourse should be such as not to need varied repetition, it is the proposition. It may need repetition to make sure of the ear of the hearer, but should never be repeated by variations of statement for the sake of his understanding. Yet prolixity from repetition is an inveterate infirmity of the pulpit. It may result from a preacher's want of clear conception of his theme. A foreign critic says, that, with some writers, style grows out of thoughts; with others, thought grows out of style. In the case now in hand, the preacher's thought grows in the process of his anxious experiments in trying to give it intelligible form. The thought of the proposition grows out of its style. The same labor of mental apprenticeship to a subject which we noticed as often bungling an introduction produces, also, a confused proposition.

The subject of a discourse once presented here for criticism, when it was denuded of its mock profoundness, was this, "long-continued sin hardens the moral sensibilities of the sinner." But the preacher had not distilled it in his own mental laboratory down to this simple residuum. It was still seething and sputtering in the crucible of his own thinking. Said he, "Your attention is invited to a consideration of the fact that a disregard of the voice of duty, if long continued through a series of many years, exerts an injurious influence upon the entire moral man; that it is the nature of moral evil thus to infect and poison man's moral being, producing moral disease and death; that a violation of the moral laws of our being tends to an entire destruction of the moral sensibilities and to a degradation of all that distinguishes man as a subject of God's

moral government; and, in illustration of this subject, I remark first," etc. What subject? Who could divine it at the first guess?

Prolix repetition, again, may result from a certain mannerism in composing. Some writers crave rotundity of style for all important statements. They are unconsciously fascinated by fullness of sound in enunciation, — by what Cicero calls the *ore rotundo*. Their style, therefore, takes on the corpulent build whenever an emphatic thought is to be expressed. I select an example to the point, from Alison's "History of Europe." He is introducing a discussion of the principle of human progress, which, he says, lay at the foundation of the French Revolution. He announces his purpose as follows: "It is of the highest importance to inquire to what extent this principle is well-founded." Here, observe, is one statement of his proposition. But he proceeds: "to examine how far it is consistent with the experience of human nature." This is a second statement. But he adds: "and in what degree it is warranted by the past annals of mankind." A third statement, this, of the same proposition. One thing only is proposed in this threefold form. The thought is entirely clear, but as clear in its first statement as in its last, and more clear in either one than in three statements. The writer is beguiled into a cumbrous and prolix statement by the sheer mannerism of a rotund style. He was unconsciously straining after the "dignity of history." Had he been colloquially telling a friend what he just then wished to talk about, he would have said it, probably, in one utterance of a dozen Saxon words. But, because he was writing history for generations unborn, he must swell his utterance into this trimountain of a proposition.

Further: prolix repetition sometimes arises from a false conception of the object of a proposition. The error here suggested is the same with that which we have noticed, as often tempting to the needless use of intensive epithets in a proposition. It is that preachers strive to make propositions rhetorically impressive instead of lucidly expressive of the subjects. The theme may be clear: the speaker knows what he is about to discuss; but, instead of making it clear to the hearer in the proposition, he struggles to make it vivid A case in hand will best illustrate this. A plan of a sermon once presented here for criticism was on the subject that "man by nature is destitute of holiness." This is a compact, lucid statement of the theme, and, so far as mere statement is concerned, this is the whole of it. But this was too calm for the preacher's mood. Flushed with the excitement of reflection on the subject, he was not content with clearness: he must gain intensity as well. Light was not enough: he must have a calcium light. He therefore ejected his theme in words like these: "Man, until regenerated by the Spirit of Almighty God, is absolutely sinful; wholly an enemy to God; in all the faculties of his being, distorted, depraved, guilty, and corrupt; so that no remnant of spiritual life remains in him, but he is dead in trespasses and sins, and an object of God's utter abhorrence."

Abstract attention, for a moment, from the theology of this invective: look only at its rhetoric. The preacher knew what he was at; he had very definite notions, as the result proved, of what the sermon was to be. He meant to give the hottest of hot blasts of hyper-Calvinistic theology. The misfortune was that his proposition was not fire-proof. It caught a flame

from his theology, and in a moment was ablaze. That is to say, the preacher put into the proposition the impressions which it was the business of the discussion to create. The result was prolix repetition, and, what is so often a further result of such a rhetorical error, gross exaggeration. Impression out of place very easily flares up into an extreme. Again and again it deserves to be repeated that a proposition is a statement, and only that. To vary it, and repeat it, and reiterate it, and intensify it, and magnify it, and dignify it, for the sake of rhetorical effect, are all foreign to its purpose. A perfect proposition never needs such handling. To inflict it on a good proposition is only hammering at the nail when it is already driven to the head.

This view leads to the further remark, that it is not good policy to lift a proposition, in point of impressiveness of structure, to a level with the conclusion. A proposition must always contain the conclusion; must often, in substance, be the conclusion; but it should invariably fall below the conclusion in impressiveness of statement. No single principle of homiletic policy is more variously applicable than this, "Leave room for increase of impression." Begin low, and work up. Leave space for rise of interest. Begin with a clear but calm statement of the truth; then set that truth to revolving; prove that truth; illustrate that truth; vary the position of that truth; disclose in light and shadow the proportions of that truth; till, as the discussion advances, the hearer feels that truth, and only that. Then in the conclusion you may assume that he feels it, and may proceed to apply it in the assurance that no language which it prompts you to employ will be an exaggeration, or will seem to be such to the

hearer's quickened conscience and deepened sensibilities. But to anticipate all this in the structure of the proposition is sheer reversal of nature. It can not succeed in its aim, and it would be an injury to the discourse if it should succeed.

Further: the proposition is often rendered needlessly diffuse by making it consist of the divisions of the sermon. That which has been termed the plural proposition is not relatively desirable. Unity may exist in such a proposition: necessity may rarely require it. But, when no necessity for it exists, its prolixity should exclude it. Test this in your own experience, when you incline to adopt Dr. Emmons's method of stating the theme by enumerating the divisions: pause, and ask yourself, "Why?" You will often find that you do it only for your own convenience in the discussion. It is always attended with this incidental evil, that it discloses the plot of a discourse at the outset. It leaves nothing to stimulate expectation by suspense of curiosity. This is often a sufficient objection to a prolix proposition, — that it discloses too much. Instead of furnishing only a center of interest, it marks out all the *radii* of the circle. To justify this the necessities of the subject should be imperative. When the gist of the subject can be made palpable without it, the plural form is an encumbrance. Only the gist of the subject is needed in a proposition.

The defects in point of prolixity which have now been named are illustrated in some sermons by distinguished preachers. Let me instance two examples which will at least show that it is scarcely possible to caricature the extreme of these defects beyond the reality of them in the literature of the pulpit. From the text, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed

lest he fall," Bishop Lowth proposes thus: "That these words may not only enter into your ears, but sink down into your hearts, I shall first consider the instability of human affairs and the change of things; that both particular men and particular churches may fall from their steadfastness; and that, even while they think they stand, they may be in the greatest danger of falling: and, secondly, I shall endeavor to find out the way in which we may secure ourselves against such misfortune; that, whatever come, we may not fall, but stand against all assaults, and so persevere, till our work is done, to the end of the day, when we depart hence, in the Lord, to receive our reward or doom."

Two examples were promised. A young painter once requested permission to exhibit to his master two specimens of his handiwork for criticism. Only one was sent at the first to the master's studio. It was examined, and returned with this opinion: "I prefer the other." Wait till you hear "the other" before you hazard so adventurous a criticism. Dr. Donne, from the text, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," proceeds in this style: "These words will be fittest considered like a goodly palace, if we rest a little in an outer court upon a consideration of prayer in the general; and then draw the view of a palace in a second court, considering this precious prayer in particular as the face of the whole palace; and then we will pass through the chiefest rooms of the palace itself, and then insist on four steps being taken." This leads him to specify four subdivisions.

What conceivable object of a proposition can be gained by such harangues as these? They are scarcely intelligible; they certainly are uninteresting, except as caricatures no man can remember them; and their

bulk is frightful. There is scarcely a quality of a good proposition which they do not sacrifice. The proposition of a French preacher resembled these in magnitude of theme, but was infinitely superior in brevity and in sprightliness. Said he, "I shall discourse today, first, upon things which I know and you don't; secondly, upon things which you know and I don't; thirdly, upon things which neither of us knows."

(3) A third principle affecting the form of propositions is that a proposition should be as specific as it can be consistently with brevity. Specific statement is desirable specially for three reasons. It limits the range of a discussion; it concentrates attention; it stimulates interest.

Observe, therefore, in the first place, that, to promote the specific quality, the logical form of propositions should generally be preferred to the rhetorical form. Which is the more specific of the two following themes? First, "The divine government;" second, "The divine government is founded upon mingled justice and benevolence." Which is the more stimulating to attention? Again: on the same principle, the plural form of propositions must sometimes be preferred to the single form. Clearness occasionally demands a proposition in which the whole discussion is mapped. The divisions need to be specified like harbors on a chart. "I propose to consider, first this, secondly that, thirdly the other," is a form of proposition which may assist undisciplined hearers to follow an intricate discussion of an abstract theme. Any one of these contingencies — the mental character of the hearers, or the abstractness of the subject, or the involution of its treatment — may justify such a proposition; and all combined may demand it.

Further: to promote the specific quality, a proposition should always convey a complete idea in itself. "Let us consider this subject." What subject? "The reasons which enforce this duty upon all men." What duty? "I propose to show that this practice is condemned by reason, conscience, and the word of God." What practice? These forms of proposition, you perceive, are incomplete. An exposition of a text does not necessarily define a theme sufficiently as derived from the text. We may naturally call attention thus to the text itself, when the text is the subject. We may define a subject only in the general by designating it as "The subject presented in the text." But these are very different forms from that in which we ask attention to "this subject," "this duty," "this principle," and leave the hearer to his wits in discovering the theme of discussion. This will be best illustrated by an example in full. Take the following from the Rev. Dr. Romeyn, omitting the text, that you may see what a headless trunk a proposition may be to one who had not given attention to the text. Dr. Romeyn proposes thus: "To the means by which the latter were preserved from the desolation of the former, the manner in which this means was used, and the success which accompanied the manner of using the means, our attention is directed in the text. A few remarks explanatory of each of these particulars will first be offered, after which such a use will be made of the text as is suitable to the solemnity of the present occasion." What one specific idea do you derive from such a proposition? How much do you know of the object of the sermon?

Again: the specific quality requires that the proposition should not generally be stated in the exact language of the text. From the text, "It pleased the

Father that in him should all fullness dwell," Simeon derives the subject, "The Fullness of Christ." From the text, "Christ is all, and in all," he deduces the theme, "Christ is All." From the text, "Wrath is come upon them to the uttermost," President Edwards draws the proposition, "Wrath is come upon the wicked to the uttermost." What is the cause of the dullness of these forms of proposition? They are not obscure; they are not prolix: why are they so devoid of stimulus? It is because they specify nothing in advance of the letter of the texts. Scarcely do they vary the language of the texts. They do nothing to reproduce the ideas of the texts in modern and vivacious style. As propositions, therefore, they add nothing to the texts. As well might the texts stand alone. Contrast such propositions with this from Dr. Emmons. Text: "The bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it." Proposition: "A man's religion may be his ruin." This is clear, pithy, and alluring to attention, because it specifies in modern dialect the literal sense of the text. For the uses of a proposition it improves upon the text.

The specific quality in a proposition demands, further, that it should not specify any thing which is not discussed in the sermon. The proposition sometimes overreaches the sermon, not by needless or irrelevant synonyms, but through inadvertence. "The folly and guilt of being ashamed of Christ" is the theme of a sermon which discusses only the guilt of that sin. "The folly" of it is an excrescence. This example represents a class of cases in which the defect is not primarily in the substance, but in the form of the proposition. The cause of the defect is an unmeaning overflow of the style.

(4) A fourth principle respecting the form of the proposition is that it should be framed with as great degree of elegance as is consistent with clear and forcible expression. Finish of form often reduplicates force. Sculpture owes much to the purity and polish of marble. Similar qualities produce similar effects in style. The style of a proposition should comprise that rare blending and proportion of qualities which never make one think of the style. To this perfection of form, elegance is essential. Two things are fundamental to it.

Elegance requires the restriction of the vocabulary of propositions to classic English words. "The unbelief of gospel-sinners" is the subject of a sermon by the late Professor Shepherd. Imagine the sermon addressed to Lord Macaulay, or to Edward Everett. "Soul-prosperity," "soul-dejection,"—these are themes of sermons by Whitefield. What right have preachers, more than other scholars, to create a mongrel dialect? "Warning to carnal and worldly-minded professors" is the proposition of a discourse by Simeon. Professors of what? A few years ago, a sign over a shop in the Strand in London announced that a "professor of shirt-making" offered his services there. A sermon was once read in this lecture-room, for criticism, the preacher standing at the right hand of the presiding officer; and the proposition was "To consider the sins of professors." The usage of the pulpit has from time immemorial been unscholarly in retaining obsolete words, cant words, technical words, words never heard outside of the pulpit, which deform a proposition even more than any other fragment of a discourse, because its pre-eminence of position enforces attention to them.

Again: elegance in a proposition requires purity and

ease of English construction. "The guilt of unbelief under gospel light and the strivings of the Spirit, conscience can not but discern and condemn." Why is not this an elegant proposition? Because its construction is Latinized. It is Ciceronian, not English, except in the hybrid style of English for which critics have coined the epithet "Johnsonese." That is not a perfect proposition which attracts attention by its clumsiness. It may be clear; it may be forcible: but why not adorn and even augment these qualities by adding elegance as well?

(5) The fifth rule respecting the form of a proposition is that its preface should be distinct, simple, and on different occasions, varied. I refer here to the few prefatory words by which the announcement of a subject is foretold. These are often of more importance than they seem to be. First, the preface should be distinct. Let it indicate clearly, for the moment, that the subject is about to be defined. Give always a momentary forewarning, which shall be to the announcement of the subject what the bell of the telephone is to the message which is to follow it. Again: the preface should be simple. It is only a rhetorical expedient to call attention: do not make a parade of it. The most obvious thing to say is the best thing to be said.

The preface should be varied on different occasions. Five things suggest the most natural variations. One is the preacher; as when you say in announcing your subject, "I invite your attention;" "I propose to speak of;" "I design to prove;" "I intend to illustrate;" "It is my wish to consider;" "It is my purpose to remark upon," etc. But this form, always adopted, is egotistical. A second suggestion of variety is the text; as when you introduce your theme by observing, "The

text contains;" "The text invites;" "The text suggests;" "The text illustrates;" "The text is an example of," etc. But this form, always chosen, is monotonous. A third suggestion of variety is the sermon; as when you indicate your proposition by saying, "This discourse will be devoted;" "The remarks this morning;" "The discussion before us;" "The subject of our meditations;" "The theme of our reflections," etc. But this form, unvaried, is an excess of form. Sometimes the occasion may suggest the preface; as when you open the way by saying, "The occasion is favorable;" "The day is becoming;" "The services of the hour;" "The improvement of holy time," etc. But this, without variety, is stiff. The fifth thing which may pave the way to the subject is the audience; as when you say, "My friends and brethren;" "The experience of many of you;" "The inquiries of some of you;" "The difficulties which you have felt;" "The interest which some have expressed;" "The afflictions which some of you have suffered." The personal history of the audience may thus be made to suggest many subjects of discourse. This is not a hackneyed form of preface. It gives a gentle stimulus to attention. Always use your audiences in every natural way. As you prove, illustrate, explain, by reference to them, so build your subjects upon their thoughts, if you can. Seem to have selected the theme at their suggestion. It is an innocent art.

But the point I would emphasize is to aim at variety. You perceive that the possible forms of these rhetorical prefaces are innumerable. There is no need of monotony. A preacher, even in trifles, should not be a parrot. Charles Lamb used to exercise great ingenuity in his modes of subscribing his name to his letters. Genius

is not above care for such trivialities. But in preaching, nothing that saves a momentary sense of monotony is a triviality. Any thing that must be done is worth doing vivaciously. We should imitate Nature, which never makes two anemones alike. Even snowflakes, which are to melt in the falling, the microscope shows to be copies of an interminable variety of geometric figures, some of which science has never conceived till our times. If we were to select the one most significant and omnipresent sign of *life* in matter, mind, or spirit, it would be this one grace of all discourse, — variety.

LECTURE XXVI.

THE DIVISION: NECESSITY, EXPRESSION.

THE word "division" defines itself. We designate by it the principal sections of an orderly discussion.

I. Are divisions necessary in a sermon? The question is twofold: Is the existence of divisions necessary to the speaker? Is the statement of divisions necessary to the hearer?

1st, The objections to either the existence or the statement of divisions are briefly these: 1. That preaching by pre-arranged plan tends to the exclusion of extemporaneous thought; 2. That it tends to excessive formality in preaching; 3. That it impairs the freedom of direct appeals; 4. That it is unfavorable to unity of discourse; 5. That in argumentative sermons it gives needless prominence to weak arguments.

2d, Yet these objections will disappear as we proceed to consider the reasons for both having and stating divisions in the discourses of the pulpit. We suspend, for the present, all questions respecting the number of divisions, and the numerical form of statement. All that is claimed at present is that good discourse in the pulpit demands that a preacher shall have divisions in his own mind, and that he shall so state them that hearers shall be distinctly sensible of them.

(1) Divisions thus formed and stated promote per

spicuity of discussion. They aid a preacher in gaining perspicuity; clear mental action works instinctively by plan, and each assists the other. You understand a subject the better for having reduced it to a plan of discourse. A natural division of a subject for use is no more nor less than a philosophical analysis and arrangement of its materials; your own thoughts are the more lucid for the discipline. Divisions also assist the hearer to clearness in understanding a discussion. Why should not a hearer, in this respect, profit by a statement of a plan, as well as a preacher by the existence of a plan? The fact that he is a hearer, that he must depend on the momentary perceptions of the ear, that he has no chance for review, for delay, for growth of thought, renders him specially dependent upon the facilities which logic suggests for an understanding of oral discourse. The whole argument for the statement of propositions bears with nearly equal force upon the necessity of stating divisions also.

Specially is it to be borne in mind that the subjects of the pulpit are such as to render divisions necessary to clearness in their oral discussion. The range of thought with which the pulpit has to deal is immensely above that to which the popular mind is stimulated by any other form of public speech. A preacher has a very critical work to do in attempting to bring down themes of high discourse within reach of the common mind, and to secure for them an intelligent and interested hearing. Science tells us that a drop of water contains a flash of lightning. Thus electric are the elements of the common stock of thought in pulpit discourse. Common are they as the raindrops; yet the forces of vivid conception and of intense impression are locked up in them. A preacher's work is to release

and to develop those forces. To do this, we need every facility of expression which logic gives to vividness.

Hence has arisen the peculiar favor with which these forms of analytic discourse have been regarded in the pulpit. So far from their being a deformity, originating in the pedantry of the pulpit, they are one of the necessities to which the pulpit has been driven by the lofty nature of its subjects. How large a proportion of the common people, taken at random, could Ralph Waldo Emerson hold together by his cementless periods on Immortality? Yet the pulpit sets itself to the task of making immortality a living truth to men whose days are spent in shoe-shops and hay-fields, and to women who live over wash-tubs and cooking-stoves. The thing can not be done by the fluent and unscholarly method of the lyceum.

(2) Divisions promote comprehensiveness of discussion. They assist a preacher in collecting and arranging the materials for such a discussion. Try the experiment on the materials of a half-digested sermon. Reduce such thoughts as you have to a plan. The effect will be to reveal to you at once what deficiency exists, and where it is. That is to say, a deficiency, if it exists, is disclosed by classification. Is an argument missing? Is an objection unanswered? Is a fact wanting for illustration? Is one side of the subject a blank? Is an application of it impracticable, or far-fetched? Whatever be the gap in the fabric, classifying in a plan, in which statement shall be definite, and arrangement orderly, will discover the gap, and will set you at work to fill it. In this respect, the materials of a discourse are like the specimens of a cabinet of minerals. Nothing but a reduction of them to order by classification

will disclose what vacancies exist, and must be filled Important omissions in a sermon are thus avoided.

Divisions also assist a hearer ir perceiving and appreciating the comprehensiveness of discussion. St Peter's at Rome makes no such impression of magnitude from an outside view as from the interior. So it is with a complete discussion. To be appreciated, it must be explored: the parts of it, in their order, must be seen. Materials classified in a visible plan will make the impression of immensity, when the same materials thrown together miscellaneously will seem diminutive, because incoherent, and, if arranged in invisible order, will be monotonous.

The entire force of textual preaching depends on this power of divisions to reveal a subject. The fullness of thought in a commonplace text may often be disclosed to the dullest hearer by the expedient of textual divisions. A modern preacher, on the text, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint," divides his discussion thus: 1. The text commands a duty, which a modern philosopher has pronounced the "most stupendous" act of which man is capable, — "To *pray;*" 2. The text enforces the duty of prayer by appeal to the supreme faculty of our nature, — "Men *ought* to pray;" 3. The text suggests that, so far as we know, no other order of being exists, to which prayer is a duty so imperative as to man; 4. The text implies that success in prayer depends on that state of mind which insures its constancy, — "Men ought *always* to pray;" 5. The text teaches that prayer is an act of courage in times of extreme emergency: "Men ought always to pray, and *not to faint.*" Does not this plan illustrate how hackneyed texts may be freshened, and how biblical authority may be given to a suggestive

train of thought, by the mere sense of fullness in the discussion, produced by a textual division elaborated and formally stated?

(3) Divisions promote unity of discussion. They assist a preacher in preserving unity. That preacher must habitually think in slipshod gait who can deliberately plan a vagrant discourse. The very effort to classify materials tends to unify them in the result. It is an excellence in divisions, that they thus stand guard over extemporaneous thinking, and shut out all that is not tributary to the result. Still more do well-constructed divisions assist hearers in perceiving the unity of a sermon. Why is it that the incidents often seem to make more impression than the doctrine of a sermon? A standing grief is this to preachers. An illustration, an anecdote, a pictorial passage, an antithetic sentence will be remembered and commented upon, when the drift of thought to which they were tributary will not seem to have been understood. The reason often is that the drift of thought has not been made palpable by landmarks. If you have ever read Carlyle's "History of the French Revolution," you were doubtless sensible of the fact that it is unfit for a beginner in the study of French history. Familiarity with other histories of the same period is necessary to an understanding of Carlyle. Unity of aim exists in his work. Trained readers can perceive that unity. But to other readers it is a chaos of inconsequent remark, from which they get nothing but here and there a thought, a metaphor, an invective, which stands alone in a wilderness of incoherences. History to such readers the work is not. Very similar are those sermons which require trained thinkers to perceive the drift of them underlying their incidents.

(4) Divisions, further, promote progress in a discussion. They assist a preacher in making progress. Organization achieves in discourse that which it achieves in every thing else, — rapidity of execution. Sir Walter Scott lamented late in life that he had never habituated himself to compose his imaginative fiction by previously formed outline of materials. He advised young writers not to imitate his carelessness in that respect. He pronounced it intellectual recklessness to trust, as he did, to the excitement of composition for the evolution of his plots. That he could do it he attributed to the imaginative character of his work.

The same expedient assists a hearer, also, in perceiving progress of discussion. Few things are so essential to impressive discourse as the sense of progress. Hearers crave the consciousness of achievement. Have you never listened to sermons in which this sense of achievement was so feeble, that hearing was labor? Very earnest and animated preachers may produce this effect. They remind you of a top at the height of its invisible revolutions, so tremendously busy are they spinning on their own axis; but you do not seem to get on with them. Why do hills, valleys, rivers, ravines, mile-stones, guide-boards make a traveler sensible of progress? Any thing which diversifies the monotony of scenery creates the sense of advance. St. Paul, when he came to "The Three Taverns," "thanked God, and took courage."

Our modern usage in oratory, by which we say "in the first place," "in the second place," and so on, had its origin in the old Roman custom which the speakers in the Forum had, of associating mentally the heads of a speech with certain localities around them. This thought was deposited in one place, that thought in

another place; and, as the speech advanced, the orator moved around mentally from one locality to another, gathering his materials as he went, and labeling them for the aid of the hearer's sense of progress, as well as his own, with the formulæ of introduction, "in the first place," etc. In the first rank of forensic appeals the transitions are marked with even more than the clerical precision of "first," "secondly," "thirdly." "I have now finished this part of my argument;" "I beg you to remember the fact which I have proved;" "And now let me ask your attention to another point," — such is the style of transition which you hear in court-rooms, where pleaders have a point to carry, with twelve plain men in a jury-box. The smooth ground-swell of discourse so often chosen in the pulpit by men who affect a literary style would find no favor among the leaders of the English or American bar.

(5) Divisions also promote conciseness of discussion. They aid a preacher in being concise. Skillful architects will tell you to the inch the shape and proportions of the building which shall most successfully economize space. So, in a sermon, good divisions help to compact structure. A perfect sermonizer will trust largely to them for crowding the greatest bulk of thought into the shortest time.

Divisions also assist a hearer in appreciating a compact discussion. To make an undisciplined hearer sensible of the fact of crowded thought in a sermon, you must in some way tell him of it. Divisions do this indirectly. They call attention to one thing at a time: therefore they concentrate attention. They disclose, if it exists, all waste of words. Consequently preachers who spin discourses of thin fabric are not fond of definite divisions. Nothing discovers poverty

of thought more surely than a pertinent plan. A good division would cause many an inflated sermon to collapse. "Oh for a thought!" said one layman, after listening to a fluent preacher, — "Oh for a thought! I get nothing to carry away with me." Probably the sermon contained no thought which would admit of crisp statement; nothing which would bear to be numbered "one, two, three:" therefore nothing worth carrying away. So far from being an evil, it is an excellence in divisions, that they restrain excessive hortation. For some men it is a healthful restraint upon tiresome appeals, that it is unnatural to say, "In the fourth place I warn you, and in the fifth place I exhort you, and in the sixth place I beg you to weep."

(6) Divisions promote elegance of discussion. But are not divisions formal, hard, angular? I answer, Is there no beauty in a plan of thought, in logical order, in fitness, in proportion? Is transparency never beautiful? Are not the angles of a star beautiful? The truth is that there may be very great beauty in an outline of a sermon. Clearness of statement, finish of form, orderly succession, unity of aim, completeness as a whole, and growth in construction are all elements of graceful discourse. By having framed one such division, a preacher is unconsciously quickened. The hearer, too, feels the magnetism of it, though unconscious of its origin.

(7) Divisions may be made to assist a preacher in meeting without loss of power the popular demand for brevity. This demand is a threatening evil. Audiences will not tolerate the old measurement of length of sermons. Preachers can not control the public taste. We have only to accept it, and to make the best of it. How to do this is a very intricate problem. We can

not do it by brevity of speech alone. Much as the popular mind craves brevity, it will not now, any more than it would a century ago, tolerate preaching which has no solid thought. The task of the preacher, therefore, is to compress into the smallest possible amount of time in the delivery the greatest possible amount of solid yet interesting matter.

To achieve this, well-framed divisions are indispensable. Short, crisp statements of the salient thoughts of a discourse will often save the necessity of prolix argument. Statement which carries in itself the force of argument is the style of divisions now needed in the pulpit. With such divisions to emphasize the imperial points of a discourse, you can pack into it vastly more material than can by any ingenuity be put into the same length of slipshod harangue. Take some of President Finney's sermons, for example. Although he carries division to an extreme, yet his sermons show illustriously the power of solid thought, when sharply stated, arranged in rigorous logical order, and enforced by a profound evangelical spirit. One of his most powerful discourses contains thirty-one of these massive blocks of thought, some of them with no amplification whatever. Few preachers of our own age have illustrated so splendidly as he did the power of naked truth to reach the human conscience. Such preaching is to the pulpit what the telegraph is to the press. It is force and speed combined in the superlative degree. Yet it would be impossible without a vigorous and constant use of the organizing power, which expresses itself in good divisions.

(8) Divisions promote interest in a discussion. This they do by promoting clearness, unity, elegance, and speed. The enthusiasm of the preacher is most

vigorously sustained by a clear, unified, elegant, progressive plan of thought before him as a model. The act of framing such a plan creates a courageous interest in executing the details. The interest of the hearer is even more dependent upon good divisions. The unity which they create prevents the tedium of confused thought; and nothing is more tedious than confused thinking. Their elegant structure invites interest in their expansion. The sense of progress which they quicken stimulates attention; and the mental rests which they furnish relieve the weariness of prolonged attention. Observe the rhetorical structure which Coleridge has given to the essay which he has entitled "The Friend." He introduces several *excursus* from the main subject, which he terms "landing-places." They are chiefly a rhetorical device for relieving the tedium of prolonged and abstract discussion. John Locke would have sought the same effect by means of chapters and sections. Sermons find the same relief in the expedient of divisions.

Even that class of hearers who are beguiled by false tastes and affectations can always be reined up to healthy thinking by a compact, racy statement of an elemental truth, like those which divisions should express. Plain sense pithily uttered will catch and hold a wandering mind. No sane man ever clears himself wholly from common sense. Let that speak in concentrated thought, and thought will spring to answer thought. On the contrary, that style of discourse which needs no divisions is not weighty enough to produce in the hearer any interest which demands relief. It may please; it may entertain; it may excite curiosity; it may reach the superficial feelings: but it does not penetrate profound sensibilities; the great

passions are not moved by it; hearts are not swayed by it. It is a style of thinking which resembles the work of a portrait-painter who was noted for the beauty of his faces without the expression of character in them, and whom Chantry criticised by saying, that, "in painting a head, he took out all the bones and all the brains."

This view of the necessity of divisions to that style of thinking which most deeply moves hearers is confirmed by the fact that really powerful preachers who have been theoretically opposed to them have still used them. The most potent arguments against them which I have ever seen were attributed to Robert Hall. Yet he generally employed them. Only two or three of his published sermons appear without them; and those were occasional sermons, like that on the death of the Princess Charlotte, in which he thought it necessary to be specially literary and ornate. In his ordinary discourses, in which he aimed to achieve the direct business of preaching, he found them necessary, as do other preachers. In our own country, no man has contended against the fetters of divisions more earnestly than Dr. James Alexander. His "Thoughts on Preaching" is full of flings at them. Yet he, also, in his practice, used them. These men were both of them strong preachers. They found, that, theory or no theory, the great strength of the pulpit can not find utterance without these "angular" expedients of logic.

(9) Divisions promote permanence of impression. We may safely say, that, other things being equal, that is the best sermon which furnishes the most effective means of holding it in the memory. The most effective of such means commonly are the text, the proposition, and the divisions. These are the parts of a sermon which usually have the longest life. A preacher, above

all other public speakers, aims at lasting impressions He needs, therefore, as many expedients as are natural, to make truth penetrate the memory. Dr. Lyman Beecher used to tell an audience, in his uncouth way, at the close of a division which was vital to his argument, exactly what he wished them to remember. "Hold that fast," he would say; "Nail that thought down;" "Don't let this slip away;" "Put a peg in there." Just this is the natural working of clear, concise, orderly divisions. They are the "nails fastened by the masters of assemblies."

I have dwelt thus long upon the necessity of this expedient in sermonizing, because it is so often underrated. The present drift of clerical taste underrates it. Secular literature ignores it. Wit, which has no claim either to piety or to literature, makes a butt of it. Many preachers, therefore, are inclined to surrender it as an antiquated fixture of the pulpit, which should go with the sounding-board. Yet one thing is noticeable; that the depreciation of the use of divisions accompanies the depreciation of elaborate preaching. The less esteem a preacher has for them, the less he feels for the preaching which needs them. Argumentative sermons, doctrinal sermons, intellectual sermons, long sermons are generally decried in the same breath which pronounces against divisions. Talks, exhortations, pious remarks take the place of sermons in the practice of such critics.

By this review of the necessity of divisions, and of the style of thinking in sermons which divisions represent, I am reminded of what Pascal has said of the "geometrical spirit." He contends that all profoundest thinking involves a tendency to geometrize. That is, it involves that bent of mind which defines, which

proves, which demonstrates, which therefore affirms positively in the end. Plato said of the Infinite Mind, "it constantly geometrizes." This drift towards definitive truth is characteristic of all vigorous preaching. As we observed of propositions, so, also, is it true of divisions, that they represent this style of thinking in the pulpit; and the disuse of the one is destructive to the other. Cultivate, then, that which Pascal calls the geometrical spirit. Only thus can you fairly deliver the inmost spirit of Christianity. Ours is one of the few "religions of the book" which the world has known. It claims to be definite, revealed, positive, authoritative. It is reason addressed to reason, and faith commanding faith. To speak to men in the full spirit of it we must "geometrize." We must construct. We must be architects and builders. Sermons must be elaborated and finished structures. No other part of them should be so deftly elaborated as the inner framework. That should be a finished mechanism, even if nothing else is finished.

II. The second general topic in the treatment of divisions is the inquiry, To what extent should visible division of the materials of a sermon be carried? This is a topic on which we should keep clear of artificial rules. Yet certain general principles every preacher's good sense can apply in a flexible way.

1st, The extent of division should be regulated primarily by the nature of the subject.

(1) Some subjects repel numerous divisions. A house built of bamboo could scarcely admit of a second and third story. So a theme may by its nature be restricted to divisions simple and few. For example, transparent subjects are burdened, if treated with numerous divisions. "The value of the soul,"—how

would you naturally divide a sermon on this theme? The subject is commonplace; the best materials of thought upon it are painfully so: the aim of a sermon upon it is clear from the outset. There is no opportunity for the surprises induced by an unexpected train of thought. Is it natural to load down such a subject with a long array of division and subdivision? Obviously not. Division and subdivision are the index of elaboration. A public speaker must be watchful of his implications as well as of his expressions. The title of one of Fichte's philosophical tracts is this, "A statement, clear as the sun, of the true nature of my philosophy; or, an attempt to *force* the reader to understand." What is the implication in such a title? Either that the volume is very abstruse, or that the reader is very obtuse. So the framework of a sermon may have its implications. Elaborate division and subdivision imply their own necessity, either because of the nature of the subject, or the character of the audience. When, therefore, they are applied to a very simple theme, they awaken a sense of incongruity by the contrast of great labor with easy and foreseen result. We do not like to be dragged laboriously to a foregone conclusion. Subjects, also, of which the chief use is to appeal to the sensibilities of hearers do not admit of numerous divisions. A sermon of consolation to the afflicted could scarcely be minutely subdivided. Divisions are the index, not of an emotive, but of an intellectual process. The crisis of a tragedy can not naturally be developed in the form of a syllogism.

(2) Some subjects demand minute division. The necessity of analysis is evident on the face of them. Subjects on which the truth is easily misunderstood or may be plausibly perverted may require numerous

divisions. The doctrine of decrees is one of the difficult subjects of discussion in the pulpit; and the difficulty lies largely at the point of making hearers understand what the doctrine is. It must therefore be analyzed, distinguished from what it is not, defended against perversions, shown to be a necessary outgrowth of any form of divine government. It is one of a class of themes on which we not only must distinguish truth from error, but must as carefully distinguish truth from truth. Proportion and perspective are every thing in such discussions. In like manner, truths which are open to many and intricate objections often need to be treated with numerous divisions. The doctrines of depravity, of prayer, of the Trinity, are exposed to a multitude of objections. So far as they go, the objections are forcible. Around all the centers of Christian thought real difficulties are dense. If such truths are to be thoroughly handled, objections must be fairly stated, and conclusively answered. This requires divisions proportioned to the points to be discussed. Guarded statement, explanation, assertion qualified by assertion, truth balanced by truth, proof multiplied upon proof, — in a word, all the arts germane to logic, may be needed to disentangle such truths from the crowd of real difficulties which surround them in the minds of hearers.

Further: subjects which are very prolific of practical applications may need numerous divisions. Of some themes the distinguishing feature is their marvelous fecundity in practical applications. They branch out into innumerable uses. You can not unfold their affluence without stating and distinguishing those uses. The natural vehicle for their conveyance is divisions.

(3) One general principle, therefore, which should

regulate the extent of divisions is this, that, the more severely the subject tasks the mind, the more imperative is the need of a thorough division of materials. Even when the power of intellection is not severely tasked, the power of recollection may be.

2d, The extent of division must be regulated, in part, by the character of the discussion proposed. The same subject may admit of a difficult or a facile discussion. An argumentative discussion obviously demands more careful division than an exhortation. An explanatory discussion may require a more thorough analysis of the materials than an argument on a subject well-known. A polemic discussion may call for more cautious and multiplied distinctions than a practical treatment of a truth undisputed. A comprehensive discussion would clearly necessitate more numerous divisions than one of restricted range. I name these particulars only to enforce the principle which they all illustrate, that division should equal, not exceed, the demands of the discussion. To determine what those demands are criticism can not go back of the good sense of the preacher.

3d, The extent of division must be regulated, in part, by the character of the audience addressed. An audience of children would demand that divisions be few. But they would demand, also, subjects and discussions which require but few divisions. An uncultivated audience of any kind would require that divisions be moderate in number and degree. To an undisciplined mind, multiplied or intricate divisions are as burdensome as a labyrinth of thought undivided. But no audience is independent of divisions in any elaborate discourse. It is a mistake to trust to the intelligence even of a select audience to follow an elaborate train

of thought, without the helps to perspicuity which visible divisions furnish.

4th, The extent of division must be regulated, in part, by the time at command in preaching. You will soon discover that the same amount of material can be presented in less time with only a general division than with a general division and a subdivision. Every division is a rest. Its statement requires time. The chief change which the outline of a discourse often needs is to abandon subdivisions, and to throw the salient thoughts into one continuous series. The difference between the two methods is like that between a way-train and an express-train. You traverse the same distance at different rates of speed, because with different numbers of rests.

More definite rules than these are impracticable. But a sensible study of these criteria enables us to pass judgment upon certain abuses of divisions which have brought them into disrepute. The application of these principles to those abuses will be considered in the next lecture.

LECTURE XXVII.

THE DIVISION: EXPRESSION, MATERIALS.

5TH, Continuing the discussion of the visible expression of divisions, we notice in the fifth place certain obvious abuses of divisions.

(1) Of these may be named first the employment of any arbitrary number. William Jay says that he commonly made his sermons consist of five divisions. But why five, rather than seven, or three? A fixed number for which no reason can be given is an abuse. An ancient conceit of the pulpit was that of assigning to divisions some one of the so-called "sacred" numbers, — five, seven, twelve, forty.

The more frequent error of this class was one, relics of which remain to this day. It was that of a prescribed threefold division in honor of the Trinity. It is marvelous in how many different ways the piety of the mediæval Church expressed its reverence for this central doctrine of Christianity. The same spirit which led to the building of a church in the form of a cross, and to the cross in window-sashes and in the paneling of doors, induced preachers to work the idea of trinity into the mechanism of sermons. The mediæval mind saw trinity in every thing, from the Mosaic record of creation down to a three-leaved clover. One of the developments of this fancy was that of the trinitarian

division of a sermon. No matter what the subject, or its mode of treatment, the sermon must be confined or stretched, with procrustean uniformity, to three parts, no more, and no less. Some of our elder clergy, within my recollection, adhered to this as a matter of taste, perhaps without knowing its real origin. I once heard a sermon before an association of clergymen approved for consisting of three general divisions, each of which had three subdivisions, each of these being developed with three leading thoughts, and all followed by three inferences in the conclusion, and ending with the Trinitarian Doxology. The preacher should have delivered it in a three-cornered hat. Such a discourse is a miserable piece of trichotomy. The taste which could delight in it is like that which enjoys anagrams and acrostics. Persuasive speech is infinitely above it.

(2) A lawless multiplication of divisions is an abuse. Charnock's discourse on "The Being of God" has one hundred and two divisions; and his discourse on "Spiritual Worship" has one hundred and ten. One of his contemporaries preached to the extent of one hundred and seventy divisions. This is not yet an antiquated abuse. De Quincey's article on Hume's argument against miracles, though limited to twenty-four pages, has thirty-seven divisions; and another article from the same pen, of but thirty pages, has forty-one divisions. Such models are no more trustworthy than any other mania. Never whittle a subject for the amusement of it.

(3) Uniformity in the number of divisions is an abuse. Sermons should never be divided by habit. If you find yourself constructing every discourse with about the same number of general divisions, and about the same number of subdivisions, and about the same number of inferences and remarks, be assured that you

are falling into a mechanism of the pen. The life of your pulpit is dying out. The demands of subjects, of discussions, and of audiences, if well considered and obeyed, will necessitate variety.

(4) Generally it is an abuse to extend division beyond the second degree. Subdivisions of subdivisions will rarely, if ever, be distinguished as such by hearers. Few subjects which are fit for oral address in the pulpit need them, and common audiences are confused by them. In listening to such a sermon, the hearer, if his patience is not exhausted, is constantly feeling about mentally for the thread of discourse. But the great majority of ordinary hearers do not attempt to follow such a sermon at all. Whatever they get from it is in "shreds and patches," here and there. Consecutive discourse to them it is not.

(5) Visible division is an abuse, so far as it is framed for the convenience of the speaker alone. A good speaker must have more elaborate divisions in his own mind than a good hearer needs. Orderly discourse can not exist ideally without many invisible sections. To the speaker it is a convenience to state these visibly; but to the hearer this statement may complicate and encumber the subject. Concealment of your subdivision, therefore, may be a necessity to moral impression, if not to rhetorical perspicuity. Yet often the preacher's convenience overrides his practice. He maps out the discussion with excess of form, for his own use only.

(6) Visible division is an abuse so far as it exceeds the necessities of elaboration. This, again, is most frequently illustrated in needless subdivisions. Visible subdivision is elaborate form representing elaborate thinking. It is diagram representing science. Beyond the necessities of elaboration, form becomes not only

an incumbrance, but, what is worse, an affectation; for it pretends to an intricacy which does not exist. It thrusts upon the hearer a help which he does not need. It is like offering him a telescope to find his neighbor's house. The result is, that no one is relieved, but every one is encumbered.

(7) Visible division is an abuse, so far as it out weighs rhetorical force. In all oral speech, and spe cially in preaching, results depend much more on rhetor ical impression than on scientific form. Science must therefore often yield to rhetoric in the structure and expansion of a sermon. Its structure must depend on its proposed expansion. Its frame must be such that it can be expanded forcibly. The table of contents of a book may be very perfect as a scientific structure; but it is dull reading, because it has no rhetorical force. It has no expansion: it is all form. It has as little eloquence as a triangle. So a sermon may be divided and subdivided till it is little else than a skeleton. A sermon of superior materials may break down under this excess of machinery. It may be elaborately thought out and as elaborately framed: its divisions may be accurate, and their order natural. As a scientific lecture it may be a model; but as a sermon it is arid and brittle: it wants spring, speed, wings. The first step in its improvement is to reduce its weight of form, abandon the double for the single series of divisions, make science succumb to rhetoric. You will soon discover that the single series of divisions is more easily handled than the double series in rhetorical expansion. It is more flexible. Said Prior of Dr. Johnson, "His reasoning is marshaled with the exactness of a heraldic procession, or the rank and file of an army." Something is wrong in a discourse in which that sense of

order is lifted above the sense of force. Specially in the pulpit our concern is chiefly with truth in its rhetorical rather than in its scientific forms. We must divide and arrange discourse as orators, not as scientific lecturers, nor as academic teachers.

III. The third general topic of the discussions before us is that of the materials of divisions; that is, the thoughts of which they should be composed. Respecting these, the following are the fundamental principles.

1st, A division of a discourse should be necessary to the development of its proposition. The proposition is the plan in the germ: the plan is the proposition unfolded. Every division in the plan, therefore, should be essential to the expansion of the proposition. It should grow out of the proposition, and live upon the proposition, as a branch grows out of and lives upon the root of a tree. It should be impossible to see how the proposition in hand could dispense with the division in hand.

Preachers may learn a lesson from the best writers of fiction. They study the necessities of the narrative. They keep to the probabilities of history. Mr. Dickens tells us, that, while he was publishing "The Old Curiosity Shop" as a serial story, he received letters from friends and strangers on both sides of the Atlantic, begging him not to give a tragic ending to the story by the death of "little Nell." But those letters were to his mind evidence that the tragic ending was the necessary one, because the only natural one. Else, why did readers forebode it? That instinctive foreboding was an instinctive decree of art. So Mr. Dickens reasoned, and he refused to obey the suggestions of his correspondents. This kind of study of the necessities of a theme is needed in the construction of sermons.

We can not neglect it, and yet present truth in natural relations.

(1) To be necessary to a proposition, a division must be comprised in that proposition. Lord Bacon once theorized that a birch-tree might grow from the root of a felled oak. Divisions are sometimes grafted upon propositions on a similar theory. A division is often relevant to the general subject when it is not so to the proposition. It belongs to the same genus, but does not come under the species. The preacher is deceived, and classifies loosely. Your proposition is to consider the doctrine of intercession: why, then, should a division be given to remarks upon prayer in the general? Your proposition is to treat of the sin of ingratitude: why, then, devote a division to depravity? Your proposition is to urge the duty of repentance: why, then, bestow a division upon a general exhortation to a religious life? Much aimless preaching would be avoided, if preachers would adhere more rigidly to the distinction that relevancy to subject is not necessarily relevancy to proposition.

This principle, again, is sometimes violated by an unphilosophical use of biblical passages parallel to the text. Some preachers, with the laudable aim of being biblical preachers, make an unwarranted use of their reference Bibles. I can not better illustrate this error than by citing some fragments from Dr. James Alexander. Of his own method of sermonizing at one period of his ministry he writes, "Another method which I pursued was to choose a text, and then, having written out in full all the parallel passages, to classify them, and found my divisions on this classification. I flattered myself that this was a happy method, because it made my sermon scriptural."

But observe this method for a moment. "Classification" of what? Of the materials of the text? No. Of the materials of a proposition derived from the text? No. Of the natural surroundings of the text or theme? No. But of the parallel passages found in Bagster's Bible. It is impossible that such divisions should fail to contain irrelevant material. Dr. Alexander soon found this out, and ingenuously confesses it. He says, "The *nexus* between the texts was factitious, often refined and recondite, always more obvious to the writer than to the reader. It prevented the flow of thought in a natural channel. It was like a number of lakes connected by artificial canals. The discourse was disjointed, and over-laden with texts. One passage of Scripture suggested unsought is worth a hundred lugged in *collo obtorto*." All artifices for making a sermon scriptural defeat themselves. Biblical thought runs in natural channels. It is all in rivers, never in canals. Force it into canals, and you get nothing but stagnant water.

(2) To be necessary to a proposition, a division must be founded on a real distinction from every other division. Distinction without real difference is often the defect of two consecutive divisions. Difference of phraseology is accepted as difference of thought. Difference in the materials of development may conceal the fact that there is no difference of divisions. Massillon, in one of his charges to his clergy, discourses on "The Spirit of the Ministry of the Gospel" as being; 1. A spirit of separation from the world; 2. A spirit of prayer; 3. A spirit of zeal; 4. A spirit of labor; 5. A spirit of knowledge; 6. A spirit of piety. Of these divisions the last is inclusive of all the rest.

(3) To be necessary to a proposition, a division must

be founded on an important distinction from all the other divisions. One variety of error in this respect is very deceptive. It is that in which a division unimportant in itself is advanced for the sake of interesting materials which can be introduced under it. We sometimes hear discourses in which the divisions give no hint of the materials of interest in the discussion. The salient things in the discourse are not the leading thoughts: they are incidents, illustrations, antitheses, quotations, paradoxes, or other artful expedients of composition. They do not suggest the ground-work of thought; nor are they forcibly suggested by it. The outline of the sermon, therefore, is not needed for its own sake. It is only the string for the beads. Such selection of the materials of division is unnatural; yet, executed by a genius, it may be delusive. Some fascinating composition of this kind is found in all literatures. It is the chief defect in the writings of De Quincey. His "Confessions of an Opium-Eater" is an entire volume constructed in this way. He himself so describes it. A discourse thus framed may contain passages of great power and brilliancy; but as a structure of thought it is unnatural. The power to write in this way is a dangerous one: it tempts a preacher to artifice and clap-trap.

2d, A second principle respecting the materials of divisions is the converse of the one last named. It is that the divisions as a whole should fully develop the proposition. Not only should no needless divisions be introduced, but no necessary divisions should be omitted. Collectively the divisions should be a complete discussion of the proposition.

(1) Upon this topic, observe a principle which we have had occasion to notice before, — that exhaustion

of a proposition is not exhaustion of a subject. The prolix discourses of some of the English and Scotch divines grew out of a failure to recognize this distinction. Hence their interminable divisions. Their conclusions especially are omniferous. They include applicatory divisions sufficient for two or three discourses. A doctrine thus treated is like a light in a grotto of gems. The glow of the wealth discovered is dazzling; but beyond the confused sense of affluence of applicatory thought one receives no impression. No focal density of thought attracts us. This is the necessary result of an attempt to exhaust a great subject.

(2) That divisions may fully develop a proposition, the proposition and divisions should be so invented as to fit together. There are always two ways of fitting two things to each other: you may stretch the one, or contract the other. A very common illustration of this occurs in the adjustment of propositions to divisions by the use of a qualifying word or phrase in the form of the proposition. You wish, for instance, to consider the reasons for a certain duty; but you find that you can not discuss all those reasons. Perhaps you do not know them all. It is hazardous to promise all the reasons for any thing. Perhaps you have not time to discuss them all: yet you can discuss a certain group of them, which shall have weight and unity. What shall be done? Qualify your proposition by some modal phrase. Say, "Let us consider *some* of the reasons;" or, "a *few* of the reasons;" or, "the more *important* reasons," etc. A study of the proposition and the divisions relatively to each other is needful in order to disclose where the proper guard is to be applied against the danger of a failure to match.

(3) Divisions do not fully develop a proposition, if they do not sustain its intrinsic dignity. A profound proposition superficially treated, an affluent theme meagerly treated, a novel subject tritely treated indicate unfortunate omissions, which the divisions ought to have supplied. On the standard themes of the pulpit a certain fund of popular thought exists below which a sermon on one of those themes ought not to fall. They are great subjects. They are susceptible of such discussion as shall produce a great impression. The popular mind feels them to be great, and as such reveres them. The history of the pulpit has made them great in their homiletic forms. Great minds have discoursed upon them, and lifted them to a lofty niche in the popular conceptions of them. Very unequal sermons may be preached upon them by unequal minds. But a meager sermon upon one of them should never be preached by any one. More evil than good would be the natural result of such a sermon. If we can not confirm the work of our predecessors in the discussion of the grand themes of the pulpit, we, at least, should not undo it by our imbecility. For such subjects, our best efforts should be reserved. Our best health, our most profound and penetrative studies, our most elastic moods, our most affluent religious experiences should be expended upon them. Even thus, we shall not equal these imperial themes. But we may equal, and more than equal, the existing popular thought upon them. If not, our call to preach needs revision.

The most serious omissions in preaching are of materials the absence of which obscures the evangelical spirit of the discourse. If a subject naturally leads thought to Christ, it is the saddest of all omissions to leave out Christ. Yet this may be done with

no irreverent design. I once heard a sermon on "The Holiness of God," the divisions of which were restricted to the intimations of divine holiness in the material universe. Yet it is impossible to develop that subject well, without assigning the central place to the illustration of it furnished by the divine work of Atonement for the sins of man. The sermon disclosed this by its glaring omissions. Intellectually considered, it was a superior production; but it was well-nigh useless as a sermon on that theme. If the proposition had been to consider "The intimations of the divine holiness in the material universe," and only those, the case would have been entirely changed, and the evil avoided. The divisions then would have matched the proposition. But as they stood the proposition pointed to the center, and the divisions to the outskirts, of the theme. The very heart of it, as it opens to a thoughtful mind, was left a blank. Sermons which thus omit the evangelical elements of a subject are as ungainly as they are inefficient. The loss of a limb is a deformity as well as an inconvenience. But what of the loss of a head?

3d, A third principle respecting the materials of divisions is that they should consist of the most powerful thoughts which a mastery of the subject discovers. Two things in this principle are to be emphasized, — mastery of subjects, and the use only of selected materials. Defect in either is loss of power.

(1) The secret of weakness in many sermons is premature discussion. A glance at the outline of a discourse is often sufficient to show that the preacher is not ready to discuss that theme. He has not mastered it. He has worked in the dark. Collateral bearings of it have not been well explored. The divisions are

inadequate, because he has not had the subject well in hand. Statements are made, therefore, which need to be qualified, or understatements are made which need to be intensified. Till you know a subject all around and all through, you are not competent to affirm with confidence any broad range of discussion respecting it.

(2) A still more frequent evil is poverty of materials. This, too, the plan of a sermon will often discover. The divisions are not the rich products of a full mind. They are not select materials. They hint at no unspoken reserves. In discourse, as in war, power often lies in reserved forces. The possession of such unexpressed resources affects the whole movement of masterly discussion. Without that mastery of subjects which allows selection, a discourse can not be radically strengthened by criticism of details. Criticism must go back to the preliminary study of the theme.

(3) The view here expressed should modify the objections often urged against "great" sermons. Intellectual preaching is objectionable only so far as the intellectual strain is disproportioned to the spiritual fervor. In this one principle of proportion lies the gist of the whole argument on the subject. This balance being well preserved, it may be safely said, that, the more intellectual our preaching is, the better it is. This is as true as is its converse, — that, the more spiritual preaching is, the better it is. Each element is the complement of the other in the true ideal of a sermon.

There is a very obvious sense, then, in which sermons must be "great." They must embody the best materials germane to their subjects; and this, realized in any pulpit, will, in the long-run, create a "great" pulpit. In no other way can we eradicate from the

popular mind effeminate and quiddling tastes, which, if encouraged, doom the pulpit to degeneracy. You can not improve such tastes by preaching to them or at them. The way to lift the people above them is not by a direct dead lift, but by a certain leverage of preaching which can not be understood by a weak or listless mind. To create strength, you must give strength. Put into your pulpit the strength of the everlasting hills, and it will not need the coruscations of the *Aurora borealis*. Give to your preaching the vividness of the lightning, and your people will not crave the phosphorescence of fireflies.

In an age like ours, no pulpit can succeed, which, like the pulpit of Germany, lives, in large disproportion, upon the natural spirituality of womanhood and the innocence of childhood. These must be supplemented by the intellectual strength of a nation, or the pulpit can not exist as a national power. And, to command the strength, it must *be* strength. Great and timely subjects, thorough discussions, weight and fullness of selected materials, costly thoughts, — these, immersed in the depths of an intense spiritual nature, must constitute the popular preaching of the age, or the time is not distant when no preaching will be popular. All this reduced to few and plain words means that we must have great preachers, who shall give great sermons on great themes, composed of the best materials which such themes furnish to an educated mind. To the utmost of each one's ability we must be such preachers; and each one's conscience must be trained, by a thoughtful rather than an effervescent piety, to bear the intellectual strain which such preaching creates.

Is this theory a temptation to clerical ambition?

Yes: it is open to that abuse. But the peril must be met, as other moral perils must be, in doing the work of a world's necessity. The greater the deed, the greater the probationary peril in the doing: this is the law of all great achievement. The supreme temptation in this world's history assailed Him who came to it in supreme self-sacrifice. The trial, so far as we can judge of it, came in this very form of appeal to His human ambition, through the dawning consciousness of divine power over divine opportunity. Similar is the moral danger of an intellectual pulpit; and that is tyranny over a weak conscience which holds a preacher back from the encounter by religious scruples.

LECTURE XXVIII.

THE DIVISION: MATERIALS, FORM.

4TH, A fourth principle respecting the materials of divisions is that they should all be classified, if possible, upon the same principle of division.

(1) Materials are often arranged on different principles of division. A truth may be discussed subjectively by considering its nature, or objectively by considering its effects. It may be treated negatively or positively. It may be developed by argument, or by illustration, or by explanation, or by exhortation. It may be discussed under any one of a great variety of relations.

(2) Sometimes a mingling of different principles of division in one discourse is a necessity. You can not always develop a subject thoroughly on any one principle of classifying materials. The practical aim of a sermon may demand an eclectic division. Such eclecticism is no evil when its necessity is obvious.

(3) The needless mingling of diverse principles of division is an evil. This will be best illustrated by an example. The following plan of thought was once presented in this lecture-room for criticism. The proposition is "The character of St. Paul." The divisions are: 1. St. Paul's acuteness as a reasoner; 2. St. Paul's depth of sensibility; 3. St. Paul's love of his country; 4. St. Paul's fidelity to Christ; 5. St. Paul

in the closing scenes of his life. These are all salient points, in which the individuality of the Apostle's character is seen. Each one regarded singly is interesting. Each one can be impressively developed. Yet this can not be pronounced a good plan of the subject. Why? Because of the needless diversity of the principles of division. They are no less than five in number. St. Paul's intellectual character, his emotive nature, his social relations, his religious experience, the chronological order of his biography, — these five distinct principles are suggested in the plan, and each one stands alone. They give distinct patches of material cut from as many different species of fabric. What is the evil of such combinations of material? It is twofold. In the first place they tend to deceive the preacher. Such divisions often seem distinct in form when they are not so in reality. They covertly overlap; and the consequence is that the preacher unconsciously repeats himself. You can not make the three sections of a cone, and yet avoid their intersection somewhere. This is the difficulty to which divisions founded on different principles of analysis are always liable. Further: such cross-divisions tend to confuse the hearer. If the necessity for them is not obvious, the rhetorical instinct which is in every mind will in some minds murmur its sense of confusion, however bold the distinctions may be in form of statement. Here is a Gothic window. I describe it by saying that it is made of wood, and glass, and lead, and oak, and paint. I add that some of its panes are red, and some are circular, and some are blue, and some are larger than others, and that some are square, and some are green. I continue, that some are diamond-shaped, and some are opaque, and some are crescent, and some are

concave, and some are ground, and some are painted, and some are yellow, and some are cracked, and some are transparent, and some are patched, and some are missing. Taking breath, I conclude by observing that it was modeled by Michael Angelo, and is a memorial window, and that it is a venerable relic of Italian art, and that it still exists in the Church of Santa Maria in Florence, with a picture of a dove in the center, which has lost one wing. This may all be true. But is it a good description of a Gothic window?

5th, A fifth principle respecting the materials of divisions is that they should be susceptible of unity of development. We have remarked of the proposition, that it should be such that unity may characterize the discussion as a whole. The same principle applies to divisions. Each should be in itself a unit, and susceptible of compact development.

(1) Therefore a division should not comprise materials which are not one in their natural impression. For example, it is often unphilosophical to consider the nature and the cause of a thing under one division. The nature of sin and the cause of sin invite totally different processes of research, and suggest different materials of thought. They demand, therefore, separate divisions. Again: it is often unphilosophical to combine explanation and proof in one division, unless the one is but a brief preliminary to the other. To explain and to prove on equal terms in the same division invite divided attention. To explain what is meant by the perseverance of the saints and to prove the fact of the perseverance of the saints are processes so unlike, that they are not natural associates in discussion. Each must concentrate attention upon itself. For this, each requires a separate division Still less philosophical is

it to discuss the conciliatory and the comminatory bearings of a truth in one division. Often it is not wise to do this even in one sermon. It is not natural to invite and to threaten in the same breath. Men do not yield to invitation and to threats at the same moment. It is a mark of an ill-trained mind to utter both in volatile succession. Colloquial excitement which vents itself in both excites laughter.

Further: it is unphilosophical to apply a truth to Christians and to the impenitent in the same division, unless the application is one. Many truths are applicable to men indiscriminately; but many others are not. The Lord's Supper is not the same to the godly and to the ungodly alike. Its practical bearing upon the two classes requires separation into different sections. Often it is unphilosophical to present argument and appeal in the same division. This is not always true. But often argument may be abstract, or it may be incomplete; and in either case the mood for appeal may not have been created. If not created in the hearers, it ought not to exist in the speaker. The unity of the division is sacrificed, if the appeal be forced.

You will perceive from these illustrations, that the principle involved in them is not arbitrary nor trivial. It is grounded in the nature of certain processes of mind which are concerned both in constructing and in receiving a communication of thought. Certain processes can not naturally be intermingled. They may succeed each other; but they can not be blended. This is only affirming, that, in constructing a sermon, a preacher should attend thoroughly to one thing at a time. Yet you will often detect the absence of this unity as the secret cause of the self-contradiction of a division in your struggle to develop it. The defect

lies in the materials of the division itself. Though not self-contradictory logically, it is so in rhetorical impression. It is bifurcate. You have two grooves to follow at once, which are not parallel.

(2) Yet the unity of a division may admit of obvious distinction of materials. All that unity requires is a certain sympathy in the resultant impressions. This does not conflict with diversity in the instruments of impression. For instance, unity of division admits the combination of mental processes, which, though distinct, lie in one line of thought. Thus a division may propose to illustrate and to prove a truth. Illustration and proof are very closely allied in rhetorical character They assist each other. To a certain extent they interchange offices. Proof often illustrates a truth, and illustration often proves a truth. As mutual allies, they may aim at one result, and make one impression.

In like manner, unity of division admits the statement of qualities of a thing, which, though distinct, have close resemblance. A division may treat of the depth and the breadth of a principle. You are to show that it is profound in its nature, and far-reaching in its applications. These are distinct qualities, yet in unison. Depth and breadth are both measures of magnitude. The impression, therefore, is one. No mental strain is required to develop it, and none to receive it. On the same principle, unity of division admits the mention of graces of character, which, though distinct, have an obvious sympathy. You may consider in the same division injuries as demanding both forbearance and forgiveness. These graces lie in the same line. Not only is no confusion produced; but no effort is necessary, if we consider both simultaneously.

Furthermore, unity of division permits the discussion

of duties and of sins, which, though distinct, naturally accompany each other. You may propose to treat in the same paragraph the duties of godly sorrow and repentance, or the sinfulness of falsehood and hypocrisy. The duties here named are distinct in character, yet never separate in life. The sins here specified are not synonymous, yet they are always co-existent. No violence, therefore, is done to the natural connections, if such diversities are covered by one division.

Once more, unity of division allows even the combination of certain opposites of material. Opposites are not always contradictories, as facts are not always truths. Some opposites in thought are complements to each other. Beneath the surface a hidden current unites and intermingles them. One of the early preachers of New England published a sermon on "Flattery and Slander." A keen judgment of character disclosed to him the fact that these two sins, though seemingly at antipodes, are one in sympathy. They are the fruit of the same mental vice, and are very apt to co-exist in the same person. The flatterer to your face will probably slander you behind your back. These opposites, and others like them, might be properly treated, not only in one discourse, but even in the same division of a discourse.

These illustrations are ample to show that unity of division admits of very great diversity of materials. It demands no iron rigidity of exclusion; but is ductile, rather, to the utmost extent of natural combinations of thought. Specially is the dual division often the natural unit. To one who is accustomed to minute criticism of discourse, the phenomenon becomes a curiosity from the frequency of its occurrence, — that things live and move by twos. It almost seems as if the

double structure of our brains created duality of thought. The point to be watched, therefore, in adjusting the materials of divisions, is not the fact, but the degree, of diversity. Any degree is natural which leaves room for natural oneness of impression. All that criticism can say is that the diversity should not be such as to impair that unity.

6th, The sixth principle respecting the materials of divisions is that those of the body of the sermon should not anticipate those of the conclusion. Here, again, as in the structure of the introduction, the locality of materials is a prime object of study. The "where" is often as vital to impression as the "what." Certain materials in every discourse naturally belong to the conclusion. To anticipate them is to impair their force. It is like reading a book backwards.

(1) Obedience to this principle is often essential to the logical symmetry of a discussion. In an argumentative sermon, for instance, the development of the proposition, and the applications of it, are totally distinct processes. The one belongs, in the nature of the case, to the body of the discourse, and the others belong to its ending. You have no logical right to apply a truth before it is proved. That is not compact argument which is suspended in the middle to give place to an appeal. The divisions of the body of the discourse must in such a case keep to the necessities of logic.

(2) The observance of the principle in question is often necessary to rhetorical force when not essential to the symmetry of logic. There is an order of rhetorical force which can no more be violated with impunity than the laws of perspective can be in painting. In an illustrative discourse, for example, it may be that no necessities of logic locate the materials here or there;

yet they may be weak here, and powerful there. Locality may determine every thing about them which is worth determining. The point of culmination in the interest of a sermon may turn on the question whether you shall present a certain illustration early in the discussion, or reserve it for the close. Even in a sermon made up mainly of exhortation, the succession of the materials may be the vital feature of the whole. Which first? which last? Hope, love, fear, — which shall begin, and which end, the appeal? Rhetorical force depends specially on cumulative impression. Some materials are more intense than others. Those of the body of the sermon should be so selected and adjusted as to leave the most intense for the conclusion.

(3) Preaching is exposed to peculiar peril of premature applications of truth. No other themes of public discussion are so prolific of practical application as are those of the pulpit. No others have such intense applications. No others are commonly so urgent in point of time. "Now," "now," is the applicatory symbol always present to a preacher's mind in the flush of his eagerness to reach his object. Therefore a pressure of applicatory thought often crowds upon the process of discussion. The materials for an appeal accumulate as the discussion advances. The impulse is to give way to them. At a felicitous turn of thought the application comes to view so luminously and so grandly, that you feel impelled to use it then and there. "Now or never" says the impulse of your sensibility. It often requires intellectual self-denial to restrain that impulse.

If you have ever ascended Mount Rhigi or Mount Washington on a clear day, did it not cost you an effort to refrain from a first look at the scenery below you, till you reached the summit, and could take in the

whole in one immense panorama? Side-looks at patches of the valley were tempting you all the way up. So it is often with homiletic experience in the handling of intense subjects. We are tempted to frequent pauses for an applicatory use of our materials in fragments. Hence proceeds that structure of discourse in which the conclusion is inferior in applicatory power to certain fragments in the body of the sermon. The first and overwhelming look was halfway down the mountain. Nothing subsequent bears comparison with that in its impression. Hence, also, comes that structure of discourse in which the applicatory impression is dissipated before the conclusion is reached. The whole bulk of the conclusion proper has been stolen in parcels, a little here, and a little there. By petty distribution of impression all impression is lost. The practical impression of discourse may be squandered by excessive distribution. The conclusion can only repeat what it might have been, if the preacher had practiced reserve and concentration.

7th, A seventh principle is that the materials of the conclusion should not return upon the foregoing parts of a sermon, except by way of intentional recapitulation.

(1) The divisions of a conclusion may return thus improperly upon previous parts of the sermon by the suggestion of new materials which belong to those previous localities. Qualifying statements which should have been in the introduction; explanatory remarks on the text which should have preceded the announcement of the subject; new proofs of the proposition which should have been divisions in the discussion, — are examples to the point. Rhetorically they are like the postscript to a letter.

(2) The same defect may arise from sheer repetition of material. The proposition may be reproduced in the form of an inference. For example, the proposition is, "The stability of the Christian Church." The sermon illustrates or proves this; then the preacher observes in conclusion, "1. We see from this subject that the Church of Christ can never be destroyed." Such discourses recall the Irish legend of St. Patrick going on a pilgrimage, carrying his own head under his arm.

8th, An eighth principle respecting the materials of divisions is that they should be as suggestive as possible of the main thoughts of the proposition.

(1) No single quality of good divisions is more valuable than this. The idea of it is that the materials of each division should be so related to the proposition as to be a reminder of it. The two should be connected by a something, perhaps an indefinite *je ne sais quoi*, like the indefinable resemblance which we often detect between parent and child.

(2) The opposite of this is a division constructed in abstract form, which relies on its development to make its relation to the proposition obvious. Have you not heard sermons which set you upon the inquiries, "What was the subject? what was the text? what has this division to do with either?" It does not remind you of the theme. You have to search for that, and then to carry it by the dead-lift of memory. The central thought of the discourse is mined out from the depths of each division as its development proceeds, instead of being visible on its surface; while usually, in a well-constructed plan, every division is an "outcrop" of the proposition. You are not at any moment in doubt as to what the subject is.

(3) Yet this incessant reproduction of the proposi

tion in the divisions can not be achieved by forms alone. The thoughts of the divisions must produce the effect. Things, not forms, must create it. Here, as elsewhere, that style only is good which springs into being at the command of thought. But, when the very substance of a division demands the form which embodies this suggestion of the proposition, no audience is so uncritical as not to feel the excellence. It lies in the instinct of good hearing to catch such sympathy between subject and division, and to feel the tribute of it to powerful discourse. When you approach the monument on Bunker Hill, you observe that the very fence which incloses the grounds is made to act as a reminder, one might almost say a historian, of the event commemorated within. It is massive in size; it is made of cast-iron; the posts are images of cannons. At a glance, you interpret them in a double sense. They are more significant than hieroglyphs. Similar to that is the effect which we should aim to create by the very frame-work of a sermon, as related to the subject which it incloses.

(4) Yet it should be observed that this quality is a matter of degrees. Not every proposition is susceptible of being thus represented with vividness in the structure of divisions. The best materials may not admit of statements which shall act as exact mirrors to the proposition. It is in illustrative sermons chiefly that we find the most striking examples of this excellence. But all sermons admit of some degree of it. It lies in the very nature of good divisions, as a growth from the root of a good proposition. If it is not possible, either the proposition or the division is to be suspected of some radical defect.

IV. The fourth general topic in the discussion of divisions is that of their form of statement.

1st, All those principles which have been observed as requisite to the construction of the forms of propositions apply as well to the forms of divisions. The practical objects aimed at are three, — that the forms of statement be intelligible without being hackneyed, that they be interesting without being fanciful, and that they be easily remembered. Divisions, however, have facilities for attaining these objects which propositions have not, and they are exposed to defects to which propositions are not so liable. I offer, therefore, some additional suggestions on this topic of the forms of divisions.

2d, The forms of divisions should be adjusted as forcibly as possible to the design of the proposition. A division may be assimilated to a proposition, not merely by its materials, but also by its verbal structure. A plan of a sermon was once delivered here for criticism, of which the proposition was, "To consider the qualifications requisite to a public profession of religion." The first division was, "The Church should be composed of regenerate men." The critic suggested this as a superior form, "The first qualification requisite to a public profession of religion is a regenerate character." "But," said the preacher, "that is the same thing." — "True," was the reply. "I did not mean to interpolate a different *thing*, but to suggest a different *form*. You propose to discuss qualifications: why not enumerate qualifications? Why approach results by inference, which can as well be taken in hand by direct assertion? Why not thus make your division a direct auxiliary to your proposition?"

(1) Yet this formal assimilation of divisions to the proposition is of no value, if it is in form only. Architects tell us that high art tolerates no painted woods.

So, in sermonizing, we want no fictions. But resemblances in fact can be used as such most effectually through resemblances in form.

(2) But visible resemblance to a proposition in the form of a division is not always practicable. The proposition may not invite such forms of divisions. It may be a doctrine to be proved by arguments, the natural statement of which is not directly suggestive of the doctrine. Very well: do not, then, force the resemblance. The oratorical instinct must decide when this excellence of form is practicable. All that criticism can say is, Recognize it as an excellence, and use it whenever it is a natural expression of the sympathy between proposition and division.

3d, Divisions should be constructed, if possible, so as to suggest each other. When they can not resemble the proposition, they may often resemble each other. If similarity of thought exists, resemblance in form may express that similarity. Interrogative divisions may often have such a resemblance. Such divisions very directly suggest each other. A series of antithetic divisions may do the same. Even a series of declarative divisions may so resemble each other in brevity as to be mutually suggestive. Said one preacher, "Let us consider the chief elements of the spirit of prayer. They are: 1. Desire; 2. Submission; 3. Trust; 4. Constancy." The resemblance here in brevity of expression makes these divisions expedients of suggestion to each other. What advantages has this resemblance in the forms of divisions? Chiefly three. The resemblance is pleasing in itself considered; it assists intelligent progress through a discourse; and it aids the retention of a discourse in the memory. The Rev. William Jay was so studious of this quality, that his

hearers used to quote entire plans of his sermons many years after they were preached.

It should be observed, however, that resemblances in the forms of divisions are not worth the seeking them by the use of fanciful expedients. Professor Tholuck, in one of his "University Sermons," has the following series of divisions: —

"1. Die Stätte seines Scheidens,
die Stätte seines Leidens:

2. Verhüllet ist sein Anfang,
verhüllet ist sein Ausgang:

3. Der Schluss von seinen Wegen
ist für die seinen Segen:

4. Er ist von uns geschieden,
und ist uns doch geblieben:

5. Er bleibt verhüllet den Seinen
bis er wird klar erscheinen."

This is ingenious; but it is ingenious caricature. The forced antitheses and the rhyme are both out of keeping with persuasive discourse. The danger always attends the cultivation of an excellence of this kind, that some minds will crowd it into caricature.

4th, Divisions should be so constructed that they shall not be easily confounded with each other.

(1) Resemblance in the sound of certain significant words may confound divisions which are really distinct. "Conscience" and "consciousness" express different ideas. But two contiguous divisions, in which those two words should be the emphatic words, would almost certainly be confounded by some hearers. The "humility" of Christ and the "humiliation" of Christ express distinct things; yet divisions con-

structed around those words as centers would inevitably be fused, and would run together, in the minds of many hearers.

(2) Distinct divisions may be confounded by the predominance of resemblance over difference of thought in the forms of statement. The sermons of the Rev. Albert Barnes sometimes illustrate this error. His mind was marvelously prolific of practical reflections on sacred themes. As he expanded them, they would be seen to be distinct; but as he stated them they sometimes appeared to be repetitions. His "Notes," which were largely sermons in their original form, exhibit many instances to the point. His practical remarks on a passage are usually plans of sermons; and in some cases a reader finds it difficult to see distinctions in the absence of the homiletic developments which made them plain. He composed with great rapidity; and his divisions were sometimes carelessly framed, as those of other pastors are apt to be, from the same cause. Confusion is tolerated, because the development removes it. Yet the superior taste would admit no confusion to be removed.

5th, Divisions should be so constructed as to be truthful in the connections in which they stand. A principle may in itself be true; a given statement of it may by itself be true: yet in the connection in which it stands in a sermon it may make a false impression. Something may precede, or something may be omitted, which renders the statement practically untrue. Error of statement may thus arise from mere position of statement.

LECTURE XXIX.

THE DIVISION: FORM, ORDER, ANNOUNCEMENT.

6TH, The forms of divisions again demand our attention for the sake of a sixth principle; namely, that divisions should be so stated as to foster expectation in the hearer.

(1) This may be done by avoiding needless commonplace in the forms of divisions. The common stock of thought in the pulpit has modes of statement which use has worn out. The more solemn the thought, the more threadbare it often is in its ancient forms. To change the figure, the utterance of such a thought in such a form is an opiate: it is either nauseating or soporific. Seek fresh expression for such materials: revolve them in mind till you can frame less hackneyed statements which shall still be natural and clear. You thus stimulate attention by quickening expectation. "The value of the soul" was in our Lord's time no novelty to human thought. To the Jewish mind it certainly was as old as the time of the great Law-giver It must have had time-worn forms of expression inherited from the prophets. It was our Saviour's mission to give it a new life, and to deepen the sense of its reality. How did he do this? He achieved it, in part, by inventing an entirely novel way of putting it in familiar discourse: "What shall a man give in exchange

for his soul?" That man possesses in his spiritual nature a treasure distinct from all others, which he subjects to barter for material joys, has been the theme of thousands of Christian sermons; but that way of putting the case was, so far as we know, original with the mind of Christ. We do not know that preacher, or prophet, or poet, or philosopher, ever invented that contrast of thought before he gave it.

How many such resurrections of old and dormant and dying thoughts our Saviour accomplished by his spiritual inventiveness, who can say? Yet this was no inimitable virtue in his preaching. A preacher has only to put his thought to himself in such a way that it touches him to the quick, and he can not help putting it to hearers in some form the piquancy of which gives it the force of an original. Grasp the handle of an electric battery fully charged, and the bystanders will know what you find there as soon as you do. So, penetrate any theme of discourse profoundly enough to be yourself electrified by it, and the electric expression of it to others comes with the electric thrill in you.

(2) Expectation may be fostered by the concealment of the conclusion in the forms of divisions. Never hint, before the time, whether you intend to appeal to a hearer's judgment in the conclusion, or to his sensibilities. By all natural arts keep the conclusion secret. Emerson writes, "Beware of the man who *says* 'I am on the eve of a revelation.'" Hearers always suspect a speaker who foretells much of what he is going to do. The doing of it they welcome in the time of it; but the promise to do they elude. One of the evils of announcing a synopsis of the sermon at the beginning is that it foretells too much. It hints at conclusions, often reveals them outright. Expectation is cloyed. It is

unfortunate when a preacher says, in announcing the last division of a sermon, "Before proceeding to apply this subject, let us remark," etc. Why hint that the subject is to be applied? A wiser expedient, often, is to have no application, in order to break up the monotony in the hearer's mind of the inevitable appeal. At the least, we should not remind him of that of which the chief peril is that he will foreknow it, and therefore will be forewarned against it. Suspense respecting the conclusion is not painful to a hearer. If the subject interests him, the suspense intensifies the interest.

(3) Expectation may be fostered by the negative method of discussion. A series of divisions shows that the truth is not this, is not that, is not the other. What is the rhetorical effect of this method? It is to excite curiosity to know what the truth is. A coming negative first suggests that the affirmative is to follow.

(4) Expectation may be cherished by the interrogative forms of division. A question is a prospective statement of a thought: it gives promise of an unknown answer: it is the forerunner of an invisible guest. To every alert mind it is welcome. Sometimes, therefore, an entire series of divisions thrown into the form of interrogatives will be a succession of stimulants to the expectant mood. Interrogative statements of emphatic truths are a striking feature in our Saviour's preaching. Socrates by his example has given it a name. Such interrogatives draw a hearer into a discussion by the sheer attraction of curiosity to see what is to come next.

(5) Expectation is stimulated by a certain indefiniteness of form in the statement of divisions. English style has an idiom, of which I have just given an example unconsciously. I spoke of "a certain indefiniteness of form." This idiom is designed to express two things,

— certainty of thought, with indefiniteness of expression. A something is hinted at as existing in the mind of the speaker, and well known to him; but the full expression of it is held in reserve. In the use of this idiom we mean both to define and to reserve our thought. We give a glimpse of it, and promise more. The form of statement is suggestive: it is a tacit prediction of more than it expresses. This form of statement is admissible in the divisions of sermons. Instead of disclosing the entire outline of the thing which you are about to develop, you hint at it as "a certain thing," — certain to you the speaker, not yet disclosed to the hearer. If this seems to be a refinement of speculative criticism, I reply that it is such only in the seeming. The oratorical instinct frequently resorts to it in practice, without consciousness of doing so. The secret charm which invites that oratorical instinct to it is the stimulus which it applies to the mood of expectation.

7th, A seventh principle is that in different discourses divisions should be constructed with diversity of form. The best forms become hackneyed by use. Genius itself would become the synonym of dullness if it worked a treadmill. An intelligent lady writes to me as follows of her young pastor who has just been dismissed: "He was a kind of machine. Clay went in on one side, and bricks ready-made came out on the other. Every Sunday he brought us a fresh brick. It was impossible not to love him for his finely-disciplined mind, and his handsome face, and his tender, spiritual tone; but his sermons were — dreadful! 'Oh!' I thought, 'if he would but have had a brick one-sided, or too big, or too little, or slack-baked, or burnt, or imprinted with his own fingers, what a joy it would be!' There was a relief when the next minister came, and gave us chips and sawdust."

What was the trouble with this handsome pastor? It may have been a want of fertility of mind; but probably not, for he was a diligent student. The *desid eratum* in his sermons was more likely to be a variety, not in their materials, but in their construction. Sermons are not bricks: they should not be made in one mould, and piled one on another with trowel and plumb-line. The intrinsic demands of thought, if obeyed, necessitate variety. Truth puts a premium on variety, because in no other way can she obtain self-expression.

V. The fifth general topic in the treatment of divisions is that of their order. What is the natural order of thought? If we take into consideration the subject, its discussion, its aim, its relation to the hearers, it is obvious that the natural order of thought must be variable. Much must be left to the homiletic instinct in the selection. The most that criticism can do is to point out the chief varieties of order by which divisions may be arranged. Each will be seen to involve a distinct principle of arrangement.

1st, Divisions may be arranged by an order of logical necessity. Some materials of discussion must from their very nature precede other materials. Some thoughts have no logical force till others have prepared the way for them. Some divisions, therefore, are founded upon other divisions; and the foundations must be first constructed. If you discuss in the same sermon the nature of a doctrine and the proof of that doctrine, the divisions explanatory of its nature must precede those advanced in evidence. You can not naturally prove a thing till you know and have affirmed what the thing is. In such cases the order of discourse is evidently imperative. We can not depart from it: we can not vary it: we can scarcely mistake it.

Oratorical instinct adopts it almost involuntarily. It is the order of logical necessity.

2d, Divisions may be arranged in an order founded on the relation between cause and effect. You propose to discuss the causes and the consequences of a moral phenomenon in the same sermon. Which shall take precedence in the order of discourse? The order of creation is not necessarily the natural order of discussion. It may be best to advance from effect to cause. Divine providence reasons with men mainly by that order. No rule, therefore, can be given, as between cause and effect, determining which shall take the precedence. We can only recognize the principle of order as founded on the relation between these two things, and recognize, also, that the order is reversible.

3d, Divisions may be arranged in an order founded on the relation between genus and species. This, again, is a specimen of a reversible order. Not invariably must the genus be first considered. The order of discovery is generally from species to genus. So may be that of popular discourse. Cumulative impression may demand this order, yet a different purpose might require the reverse order. Criticism can only recognize the order and its reversibility.

4th, Divisions may be arranged in the order of intrinsic dignity. Oratorical instinct outruns criticism in approving the value of (if I may coin a much needed word) a *climactic* procession of thought. Intuitively in discourse we begin with the less, and end with the greater. Power of impression depends largely on rise of impression. What possible sense of order in thought could have directed Neal, in his history of the Puritans, when he described Bernard Gilpin in the following language? — "He was a

heavenly-minded man, of a large and generous soul, of a tall stature of body, with a Roman nose, and his clothes were neat." Could the historian more perfectly have justified De Quincey's famous caricature of climax? — "If a man indulges himself in murder, he very soon comes to think little of robbery and from robbing he comes to drinking, and from that to incivility and procrastination."

Sometimes, however, it is an open question which of two divisions is the superior. In the defense of Professor Webster, his counsel adopted as nearly as possible the same order that Cicero did in the defense of Milo. Whether consciously or not, I do not know; but the imitation was remarkable. He argued: 1. That Professor Webster did not kill Dr. Parkman; 2. That, if he did, he committed justifiable homicide. Then, after a recess, he returned to the point first discussed, — the denial of the deed. Members of the bar in Boston were divided in opinion as to the wisdom of this order. Some contended that it indicated a wavering of conviction on the part of the counsel; that the division claiming that he did not commit the deed should have been reserved wholly for the close of the discussion. A very grave question, in that case, depended on the order of the argument. So, in preaching, the force of a sermon may demand a delicate discrimination in determining what is the order of dignity. In intrinsic dignity that truth is the most weighty which will carry the most weight over to the object of discourse.

5th, Divisions may be arranged in an order suggested by psychological analysis. A large class of the materials of the pulpit group themselves around the faculties given by the analysis of the mind. For instance, we should naturally argue man's duty: 1. To acquaint

himself with the Scriptures; 2. To yield his heart to their control; 3. To obey their precepts in his life. "Psychological" is a profound word to apply to these divisions. No hearer will think of them as such; no wise preacher will call them such in the pulpit: but they are such. Intellect, feeling, and will lie at the basis of the division. The oratorical instinct often adopts this order in the pulpit, even when unconscious of any metaphysical design. This is also one of the reversible orders. We can not always preach in the psychological groove, beginning with the intellect, and ending with the will. The opposite order may be necessary to the purpose of the sermon. All that criticism can say, therefore, is that this is an order founded on the psychological analysis. From which end the order shall proceed must depend on the aim of the discourse, and will commonly be decided, not by a deliberate, but by a spontaneous, decision of the rhetorical instinct.

6th, Divisions may be arranged in an order of time. Events in historical order, biography in chronological order, hypotheses in the order of probable occurrence are illustrations of this. Experience as actually lived lies at the foundation of a multitude of sermons.

7th, Divisions may be arranged in an order founded on weight of argument. This will commonly coincide with the order of intrinsic dignity. Like that, the order of argument should be climactic, — the weakest argument first, the unanswerable argument last. Positive argument naturally follows negative argument. Probable argument follows presumptive argument. Conclusive argument follows proximate argument. If an argument is relatively weak, be it so; let it be seen to be so; call it so, if you please. More is gained by

candor than by logical legerdemain. Inform an audience just how much an argument is worth, just how far it carries you towards your conclusion, and claim no more for it; and you command their assent both to your logic and to your candor. One argument, if true, is as good as another, so far as it goes. Weight is weight. The small weight, if gained honestly, is as respectable as a large one.

"I want good solid arguments at first sight," says Montaigne. Very true; and the pulpit should use no other than good arguments and solid. But if, of solid arguments, one is less weighty than another, why should we cheat in the weight by concealing the inferiority? Let it stand at the beginning: claim for it only what it is: let it seem to be what presumption is to demonstration. So decides intuitive logic.

8th, Divisions may be arranged in an order dependent on progress in the personal interest of hearers. One of the chief aims of preaching is to individualize hearers, and to bring truth home to each man's personality. Hence the order perhaps most frequently adopted by a keen homiletic instinct is that of progress in stimulating individual interest.

The following plan of discourse, once presented in this place, will illustrate this. Upon the subject of "The claims of foreign missions upon the Church," the divisions are as follows. Foreign missions are essential: 1. To the fulfillment of the purposes of God; 2. To the salvation of the heathen world; 3. To the development of the Church in Christian lands; 4. To certain special benefits to the churches of our own land; 5. To symmetry of religious growth in every Christian soul. In this order the advance is from the remote to the near, from the truth of infinite range to the truth of present con

sciousness. The thought moves like a ball in a spiral groove, which conducts it by narrowing circuits to a point at the center.

Such are the most important varieties of order in the arrangement of divisions. They suggest three additional remarks.

(1) Varieties of order will sometimes coincide. Two or more may be applicable to the same materials of discourse.

(2) Varieties of order will frequently conflict with each other. The aim of one may defeat the aim of another. The order of time may be the reverse of that of progressive individual interest. The order of psychological analysis is often reversed by the order of experience. The following plan will illustrate this. From the proposition, "The effects of sin on the human soul," the divisions are, the effects of sin: 1. On the human intellect; 2. On the human affection; 3. On the human will. Such was a plan once offered here for criticism. In the light of mental science it seemed philosophical. It was complete and symmetrical. What was the defect? The critic claimed, and justly, that the case was one in which the order of experience in time superseded all other principles of arrangement. In actual experience sin does not commence its ravages in the intellect. No sin exists till the will is corrupted. The order of the sermon, therefore, the materials remaining unchanged, should have been reversed. A more powerful impression may be produced by following the line of experience, and showing, first, that the will is perverted, and for good uses debilitated; then, that the sensibilities are corrupted, and for holy objects deadened; and finally, that the poison of sin is so virulent, that even the intellect

becomes degenerated, and for its loftiest purposes blinded. Thus moral perception is distorted, opinions are refracted from pure truth; then the entire moral being deteriorates under the infection, and integrity of belief ceases.

(3) Various as the several orders of division are, the object aimed at in them is always the same. It is progress in intensity of moral impression. The order which best promotes this is in any given case the superlative order. Follow that order, and you can not go wrong. End with that for which the hearer's need of the discourse is the most imperative. Final impressions should be intrinsically and relatively the most vital of all impressions.

VI. The last general topic to be considered is that of the mode of announcing divisions. This concerns chiefly two things, the use of numerical announcements, and the use of other prefatory words. By either method the chief objects of the announcement are three, — intelligibility, congruity with the feelings of the hearer, and permanence in the memory of the hearer. With these objects in view we readily see the propriety of certain principles which are flexible in their application.

1st, Divisions should be so announced that transition shall be distinctly perceptible. Must numerical forms, then, always be used? Certainly not. Transition can often be made distinct by the use of such prefatory words as "again," "further," "moreover," "once more," "finally." The object is to call attention to the fact of transition. Whatever does that announces a division sufficiently. May numerical forms, then, always be omitted? Certainly not. Some discussions require them. Transitions must often be emphasized in order to be observed. Colloquial usage em-

ploys the numerical forms freely. The common people, expressing serious thought, or offering arguments, instinctively resort to numbers. Sometimes they will assist the numerical announcements by count upon the fingers. To illiterate hearers, the numerals are of special value in quickening attention to the fact of transition, and in assisting them to follow discourse more elaborate than any which they could originate.

2d, Divisions should be so announced as to preserve congruity with the nature of the materials. "In the third place I exhort you;" "In the fifth place I entreat you:" what is the cause of rhetorical friction here? It is a want of congruity between emotive materials and the severest of logical forms. Numerals are adapted to explanatory and argumentative divisions. They are germane to intricate trains of thought. For hortatory, and often for illustrative materials, the less formal preface is sufficient, and therefore the more becoming.

3d, Divisions should be so announced as not to be confounded with each other. General divisions and subdivisions are often thus confounded. If both are introduced numerically, it is difficult in oral address to avoid confusion. A good general rule, therefore, is to number your general divisions only, and announce your subdivisions by the less formal method. Usually this will be congruous with the nature of your materials.

4th, Divisions should not be needlessly announced by a preliminary synopsis at the beginning of the discussion. We have already noticed this as often a needless form of the proposition. But frequently it is a more needless appendage to the proposition. The subject is formally announced, and then the entire outline

of the discussion is proclaimed. In very rare cases this may be a necessity. It marks the extreme of all possible form: it ought to indicate the extreme of difficulty in following the line of thought. Otherwise it is a dead weight of form which the hearer's memory must lift and carry. De Quincey, speaking of a peculiarity of Paganism, says, "Under this original peculiarity of Paganism there arose two consequences, which I shall mark by the Greek letters α and β. The latter I shall notice in their order, first calling attention to the consequence marked α, which is this, etc." You feel at once that ease is here sacrificed to form, and needlessly. The artist is obtruding upon us the tools of his workshop. Yet the forms of the pulpit are sometimes as excessive and superfluous. We have few such preachers as Dr. Emmons, and still fewer such audiences as that of the old church in Franklin fifty years ago. Yet even in Emmons's works I am unable to find more than two or three sermons in which this pre-announcement of the divisions is demanded by the character of the materials.

5th, Divisions should be so announced as not to disclose prematurely the character of the conclusion. A conclusion may be foretold, not only by the substance of the divisions, not only by their form, but also by their prefatory announcements. The Rev. Albert Barnes has a discourse, the five divisions of which are all pre-announced; and then is interpolated this declaration: "The first three of these topics I shall treat by way of illustration, and the last two in the way of inference and remark." In this declaration the preacher soliloquizes. He thus maps out the discussion for his own convenience. The discussion contains nothing which needs any such forewarning for the use of the

hearers. The disclosure of the conclusion especially is premature. Whatever else must be foretold, the character of the application should never be revealed till the moment of its instant use.

6th, Divisions should be so announced as not to deceive an audience respecting the destined length of the discourse. Never express or hint at false promises of brevity. Do not announce "a brief notice" of a division which drags itself out voluminously. Do not promise "only to hint at" a thought which you proceed to exhaust. Do not ask leave "to add a word or two" which swell into a harangue. Do not declare that you will state an inference "without remark," and then add an appeal. Then, having done all these things, do not apologize for the feebleness of your discussion on the ground of "want of time."

A preacher is under obligations of honor to his audience in this thing. He is master of the field. His hearers are helpless under the imposition of his flux of words, through which they peer in vain for the end. They can not rise and rebuke him for his prolixity. A boy crunching peanuts in Faneuil Hall has more liberty to silence a political speaker on the platform than a judge of the Supreme Court has in a church to silence a driveling preacher. Such breaches of good faith are often committed in the use of the prefatory words of concluding divisions. A preacher says "lastly," and "finally," and "once more," and "yet one thought, and I have done." Two, three, even four such consolatory glimpses of the end I have known to be given in succession; and once three such harbingers of rest were followed by a promise, which shrewd hearers were by that time too impatient to believe, that the subject should "be brought to a close by a *few* remarks." "Fi-

nally" is a very precious word to an audience. Hearers often watch for it as they that watch for the morning. Sometimes the more thrilling the sermon, the more welcome is its close. There is a weariness of excitement as well as of *ennui*. The most popular quality of preaching is brevity. If a sermon does not possess it, do not exasperate an audience by promising it.

In closing this discussion of divisions, let me express the conviction that strength in preaching depends on no other rhetorical excellence so much as on good divisions and propositions; that is, on good planning of thought. Cultivate the faculty of strong, compact, finished planning. Study critically the plans of your own discourses. Rewrite your best sermons rather than your poorest, if, by so doing, you can improve the substance, or the forms, or the order of their outline. A skeleton is not a thing of beauty; but it is the thing which, more than any other, makes a body erect and strong and swift. John Quincy Adams says that "divisions belong to the art of thinking." They are fundamental, then, to the art of uttering thought. To the same purpose is the old Roman proverb, *Qui bene distinguit, bene docet.*

LECTURE XXX.

THE DEVELOPMENT: DEFINITION, PREREQUISITES, CHARACTERISTICS.

We have now considered, with one exception, all those parts of a sermon which properly belong to its frame-work. The theme next in order is that which has been denominated the development.

I. In the criticism of a sermon the term "development" may be used to designate one or more of the following things: the entire sermon as related to the text the proposition and divisions of a sermon as related to the subject, or the divisions alone as related to the proposition. It is, yet again, restricted more narrowly to the amplification of each separate division of the discourse, and of all of them collectively. The text, the proposition, and the divisions being given, criticism designates the remainder of the sermon as the "development," and applies the term either to a division separately, or to all the divisions collectively. If true to its object, the development is an unfolding of the salient thoughts expressed in the divisions, and no more. In this sense, the work of development is the composition of the sermon as distinct from the planning of it It is the doing of the thing proposed in the plan. It is the clothing of the skeleton of the sermon with the elements of effective discourse. It is in this

last and most limited sense that I employ the word in discussing the development as one of the constituent parts of a sermon.

The work of developing, as distinct from the planning of a discourse, defines itself in practice beyond the possibility of mistake. You doubtless are sensible of this in your own experience. When you have chosen a text, evolved a proposition, and outlined a plan of a sermon, the bulk of your work is, in the majority of cases, yet to be executed. You are now to amplify, to expand, to unfold, to evolve, to fill up, to enlarge upon, to develop, — whatever you may call it; and the thing is clearly distinct from any other process concerned in the building of a sermon. To many preachers it is a work of much greater difficulty than is involved in any other process. It sets invention at work more severely, and calls into service a greater variety of mental powers, than does any other part of a discourse.

II. Let it be observed, then, that the foundation of a good development is laid in certain things which precede its execution.

1st, Of these prerequisites should be named, the possession of the right quantity and quality of materials. Obviously, if your mind is filled with only anatomical materials, you must fail in the attempt to make them live in a breathing sermon. Moreover, a certain degree of fullness of mind with right material is essential to forcible development. Sparse thoughts invite feeble utterance, even of that which a man has to say. Thoughts must crowd thoughts, that any thing may come out with force. It is the full fountain which bubbles to the surface. We often speak of digested and undigested thought. The figure is apt. A healthy stomach is a coarse symbol, but a true one, of a healthy

mind. Physicians tell us that a certain quantity of food in the digestive organs is necessary to vigorous digestion. Similar to this are certain mental operations. Fullness of mind on a subject of thought is essential to the best utterance of thought. Solid thought is requisite. Powerful utterance must be the outflow of a well-stocked brain.

(1) Yet on this topic of the invention of materials criticism can, in my judgment, say very little that is of practical use. The ancient rhetoricians — the only great ones the world has known — thought otherwise; and it requires some courage to dissent from them in this thing. They elaborated very carefully the hints by which they imagined that a mind in composing, or preparing to compose, could be assisted in gathering its stock of thought. It was believed that the mind might put out certain feelers into any subject, and invent, accordingly, both the divisions and the development of discourse. Possibly the early thinkers of the race found practical help in these artificial aids; but of what use are they now? What modern author or speaker has ever consciously employed them? Certain it is that the literary and professional world has laid them aside. The stock of the world's thought has grown large, and authorship and speech now live upon that. I can explain in no other way the fact that expedients which Aristotle — perhaps the master-mind of the race — could commend are never adopted by the leaders of modern thought.

(2) The oratorical instinct, at least, claims freedom from such artificial helps. All that criticism can do, therefore, for its assistance in the matter of invention, is to direct it to the cultivation of the thinking power In actual composing, a writer must take what comes to

him, with no such elaborate searching in prescribed channels of inquiry. I know nothing of any process of successful composition which has not in it a large infusion of the element which the world calls "chance." As a Christian preacher, I willingly give to it a more sacred name. That preacher is not to be envied who knows nothing in his own experience of a secondary fulfillment of the promise: "It shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak." Yet divine suggestion uses, not ignores, the laws of mind.

(3) When, therefore, a division of discourse presents a blank to your mind which you do not know how to fill, set your mind to thinking upon it. Fix the mind on the thing in hand: check rambling thought: have done with reverie. This is the first and the vital thing. Then group together all that you do know of the matter. Something you know, or you could not state your thought. Use that something as a bait to suggestion. Follow it into its natural surroundings. Write it down, and thus obtain the suggestive aid of the eye. A pen in hand, and an eye on a written thought are marvelous allies to the thinking power. Use in this manner whatever of the common stock of thought on any subject you find in present possession. The stock will grow upon your hands inevitably. The law of your experience will be that to him that hath shall be given.

(4) If, by such self-disciplinary communings, you originate nothing worth saying, resort to suggestive reading for a while. Read any thing which stimulates thinking. You have probably discovered in your libraries, before this time, one or two authors whom you never can read for a half-hour listlessly. They are awakening powers to your power. Your mind always

springs at their bidding. They have become your intellectual auxiliaries and friends. Turn to such volumes, and use them for the stimulus which they furnish. The thing needed is a mental awakening and uplifting which shall bring within your range of vision a broader intellectual scenery. Thus uplifted, the mind obtains inspiration, and, thus inspired, it may go back to the thing in hand, tremulous with inventive ardor. Such a process, or something equivalent to it, you will find to be effective in breaking the dead-lock which is often so discouraging to a young preacher, and which seems to spring from vacancy of mind. There is no such thing as vacancy of mind. The dead-lock ceases the instant that you succeed in putting an end to reverie. One of the remedies of physical lock-jaw is a smart charge from an electric battery. Similar is the remedy for a speechless mind.

If any one finds practical assistance from conducting the thinking process by the categories of the ancient rhetoricians, there can be no objection. But I have yet to see the youthful preacher who does find practical aid in such devices, or the practised writer who ever employs them. With such self-disciplinary use as I have advised of the materials which one finds at spontaneous command on any theme, the oratorical instinct of an educated mind may be safely left to work its own way to the requisite increase of stock. The difficulty is mental inertia, and, when that is removed, mental floundering. Get rid of these, and production follows in orderly and rich abundance, like that of any other work of creation.

2d, But this work of inventing materials suggests another prerequisite of a good development. It is a settlement of the question, What kind of treatment

does the thought in hand require? The question to be asked is, What does this division need in order to bend its development to the aim of the sermon? Is there any thing here to be explained, any thing to be proved, any thing to be intensified by illustration, any thing to be applied by direct hortation? Some one of these elements of all composing must be needed. If more than one are needed, the inquiry is, In what proportion and in what order shall the two or more be intermingled? Consciously or unconsciously, every mind in the act of successful composition does propose to itself, and does answer, these inquiries. They are the nearest approach which modern authorship makes to the use of the Aristotelian categories.

On the other hand, the incongruous character of many discourses is due mainly to inattention to such inquiries. If you prove when you ought to illustrate, or illustrate when you ought to prove, or do either or both when you ought to explain, or prove, illustrate, and explain when you ought to exhort, or exhort when you ought to do any thing else rather than that, you inevitably flounder into an incongruous and inefficient development. No amount or intrinsic excellence of materials can atone for the loss of the fundamental virtue of speaking to the point.

It becomes, then, an inquiry of vital moment to a good development, How shall a preacher judge when to explain, when to prove, when to illustrate, when to exhort, and when and how to intermingle these processes? Beyond a few simple hints, the oratorical instinct must be left to act at its own discretion. Criticism can only make the following suggestions.

(1) Judge, in part, by the genius of the subject. On the very face of it a subject may demand one

method of treatment, and as decisively repel another. Some themes must be treated, if presented at all to a popular audience, by illustration mainly. Others must be treated argumentatively. To the one class, argument would be frigid; to the other class, an imperative necessity. For example; consider for a moment the two subjects, "The Love of Christ," and "The Extent of the Atonement." Suppose that you develop the first of these argumentatively, and the second historically. You prove that Christ loved man, and you describe pictorially the range of the Atonement. It is not difficult to see, that, in each of these cases, the genius of the subject enters a protest. The two themes need to change places. You have proved where you should have painted, and painted where you should have reasoned. Your sky is green, and your grass, blue.

(2) Judge of the method of treatment, in part, by the character of the audience. An illiterate audience may require an explanatory sermon on a topic of which a cultured audience may demand proof, and an audience of children a pictorial discussion. Many hortatory sermons have been preached in college chapels, but never one as a *concio ad clerum* in the week of commencement. The character of the audience obviously determines to common sense the rhetorical development of many discourses. The oratorical instinct must be woefully warped or indolent, if it fails to respond, in many instances, to the necessities of the case in hand, without any other hint than this given by the character of the audience. Rarely will it be so distorted as in the case of one preacher in the chapel of this seminary, who developed one division of his sermon in the form of an exhortation to aged sinners, at a time when the only gray-haired man in the house was a saint of sixty years' growth.

(3) Judge of the method of treatment, in part, by the demands of the occasion. The key to the problem is sometimes found in the occasion; not in the subject, not in the hearers. Is the occasion exceptional? Is it a funeral, a Thanksgiving, a Fast Day, a Christmas, a New-Year's Day? Is there a peculiar state of things among the people? Are they in a religious revival? Are they on the eve of one? Are they in the wake of one? Are they in a religious decline? In the midst of a powerful religious excitement, it is surprising what an amount of hortation an audience will bear with quick response of conscience, when the half of it at any other time would stupefy them. On the other hand, when the wave of revival has receded, the effect is painful, if the pulpit struggles to perpetuate the quantity and quality of hortatory discussion which the revival created a demand for, but which now falls on satiated ears. Such untimely exhortation is like hammering iron when its red-heat is gone.

(4) Judge of rhetorical development, in part, by the recent proportions of your preaching, in respect to its rhetorical character. If argumentative discourse has largely preponderated in your pulpit for a while, that may be a sufficient reason for a change. Follow such an argumentative period with illustrative sermons. The need of such may properly have a retrospective bearing, and may direct your choice of subjects. Change the diet, and you may promote the more robust health. Other things being equal, the most versatile pulpit is the most effective. Few things which need so much study receive so little as the adjustment of proportions in the pulpit.

(5) Judge of the rhetorical treatment, in part, by personal tastes, information, and moods. I group these

three things together as expressive of a preacher's individuality respecting the point before us. This criterion is more frequently abused than normally used. But abuse is no argument against man'y use. You may sometimes be wise in treating a subject in that method in which you will probably succeed most happily. This will sometimes be that into which your own tastes enable you to enter most enthusiastically. It may now and then be that which your present information will enable you to execute most intelligently. It may occasionally be that in which a present mood of feeling may enable you to compose most rapidly, and therefore most intensely. Within certain guarded limits, a preacher's individuality has a claim to authority. In this, as in other things, a man's best work is happy work. It is whole-souled work. It is work to which the mind springs expectantly, even jubilantly. God never meant that any man should work wretchedly. Dejection is never a divine teaching. God has never designed that a man's work should be against the grain of his intellectual make. This is pre-eminently true of the work of the pulpit. The most effective preachers are elastic and joyous men. Eternal decrees written in a preacher's mental constitution lie back of the best of sermons.

These suggestions comprise the substance of all that criticism can wisely say to the oratorical instinct respecting the choice of rhetorical method in the development of discourses. Beyond these, criticism knows nothing, and needs to know nothing. Mother-wit does all the rest. To that instinct thus disciplined there are no impracticable subjects, unless they are dead subjects. Good sermons can thus be made on any subjects which have living roots in Christian thought.

3d, The third of those prerequisites to a good development, which lie back of its execution, is a certain mental dexterity which comes from practice only. In every art there is a knack which is never a gift. It is the fruit of an apprenticeship. I stand in awe of a carpenter, a tailor, a machinist, a locksmith, a sailor, who are well to do at their trades. They manipulate their work with such marvelous adroitness, that to me it is miracle. They are all experts from another world than mine. Their arms, fingers, legs, feet, eyes seem inspired. Their very shoulders have motions of use which I can no more imitate than I can the swoop of an eagle. They put soul into dead matter. A carpet-loom, the work of somebody's genius, has iron fingers more sensitive than mine. Its dumb lips pronounce verdict upon a defective thread which my eyes can not see, even when it stops to give time for a search. They who do these things ask me what they can do for me, and I can only mumble, "What shall be done?" They are the wise men, and I am the fool. Yet not a man of them was born inspired. Not one escaped the drudgery of an apprenticeship, long and hard, and inflexible as fate.

The same principle holds good in literary working. How to do it never comes from knowing only what to do. It comes, in part, from doing. It comes from failures, awkwardness, blunders, despairs, infinitesimal beginnings of success, happy hits which are never repeated, and the slow growth of faculties which a man can never outrun in composing. They hold him back to give them time to grow. A good development of a thought is never achieved without this knack of doing the right thing. Moreover, this knack of doing is always a specialty. We must drill for the specific

thing we have to do. We can never succeed by apprenticeship to the universe in general. An author does not get the knack of oral discourse from the making of books. A critic does not get the knack of preaching from the criticism of sermons. Journalists say that it is no matter what a man can do in the making of books, sermons, speeches: he can not write well for the newspapers, till he has served his time at it. They are right. A man can do nothing well till he has "served his time at it."

This need of mental dexterity in good preaching I notice, not because criticism can do much to promote it, but because the fact of its existence, and the laws of its growth, are a great encouragement to young preachers. It should teach you not to waste yourselves in fruitless despair, or fears of failure. Of course you will fail. Make up your minds to failure. Expect to waste a great many sermons. Expect to see some of your best sermons slipping out of your hands, and taking to themselves wings of flame. But be assured that every such discovery of failure is a germ of success. You are uplifted by so much height as you consciously stand above your yesterday's work. You have only to lay out on a present effort the best of your present power, and that very effort begets power. Thus your mind grows with perpetual increments of the knack of doing.

III. Passing, now, from these fundamental prerequisites of a good development, which lie back of its execution, let us observe, in the third place, the chief characteristics of a good development.

1st, Of these the first is unity. A division amplified is a discourse in miniature. Its singleness is essential to secure speaking to the point.

(1) Unity is specially sacrificed by an unconscious discussion of different things with one heading. This may arise from the confounding of similar ideas. A division is upon the Christian grace of patience; but the train of thought branches off into remarks upon fortitude, resignation, fidelity. The resemblance of these passive graces misleads; and a development which begins with one thing ends with another. This indiscriminate composing is the cause of a vast amount of remark in sermons upon religion in general. Every religious thought has some sort of affiliation with every other religious thought. Weak thinking has always a gravitation downward from the species to the genus It is deceived by a resemblance into the utterance of platitudes.

Another form of the same defect is a confusion arising from resemblance or sameness of words. Two words resembling each other may form an arch, over which the development passes from the thing in hand to the thing in the other hand. Have you not listened to sermons in which the guilt of selfishness was condemned in a strain of remark which involved the condemnation of all forms of self-love? Few theological blunders are fraught with so much mischief in the delusion of conscience as is the one involved in that confusion of terms. The sameness of a word in different senses is more frequently still the switch which sends the train upon a false track. Some preachers of long experience, probably have never preached a self-consistent sermon on faith, because the word is susceptible of such a variety of meanings.

Another way in which unity of development may be unconsciously sacrificed is by the confusion of thought springing from the indefiniteness of figurative language.

When figurative language droops its wings, and becomes literal, the truth which it expressed in the air may become a falsehood on the ground. Yet a preacher not sharp in watching the change may affirm both in one paragraph. A vast amount of turbid discussion about our "guilty nature" has had its origin in this unconscious transition from figure to letter, and from letter to figure. The figure is made to drop its poetic sense; and in the same breath a sermon discusses interchangeably constitutional depravity and willful sin. In the discussion of central doctrines of our faith, this unconscious passing from the figure to the letter makes sad havoc with theological consistency.

One other form of this defect arises from pressing to an extreme the suggestions of analogy. One of the most difficult things to conduct well in discourse is the use of analogies. The difficulty is owing chiefly to the double use which may be made of them. Analogy may prove a thing; but, again, it may only illustrate a thing. The difficulty, therefore, if the aim is argument, is to stop where proof ends, and not to pursue the analogy into remote bearings in which it becomes illustration only. I once heard the boy's game of marbles adduced as logical evidence of the earth-born origin of man. "See," said the wise man, "no sooner does the snow melt in the spring, and uncover the soil, than down goes human nature on all-fours to greet and grovel on mother-earth." Whatever else this was, argument it was not. Yet much of that which goes by the name of analogous reasoning suffers from thus pursuing analogy beyond the province of logic into the domain of fancy, without consciousness of the transition.

LECTURE XXXI.

THE DEVELOPMENT: CHARACTERISTICS.

(2) THE unity of a good development requires further consideration by observing a second class of errors by which it is sacrificed. These consist of intentional digressions. Every thing is intentional digression in which a speaker consciously dallies with the thing in hand. This error may take the form of discourse without construction. This is the ideal of a certain class of preachers. Religious talk, without connection, and without aim other than the general one of "pious remark," may be capped with a text, and dignified with a subject, when neither is more than a figure-head. Such a sermon is all digression. That is, it has no center of converging thought: its desultory materials have only the centrifugal power.

Again: digression may take the form of talking against time. A speaker in the United States Senate once spoke twenty-four hours continuously in order to compel the close of the session before a certain vote should be taken. It was said, that, in that time, he rambled over every political topic within the knowledge of man. Unity of impression requires intensity of aim; and an intense aim shuts out every thing but necessities. The arrow which strikes the mark goes straight and quick. The bullet which kills pauses for nothing

between. Much desultory remark in sermons springs from transient relaxation of mental intensity in composing. For the moment, the preacher speaks to fill time; and he knows that he does so. Necessary material does not crowd for utterance, and he consciously fills in with commonplaces. Commonplace is always the fruit of indifferent or of jaded thinking.

Again: digression may take the form of excessive illustration. The difficulties of composition must have already disclosed to you the temptation which a preacher experiences to illustrate for other purposes than to meet the necessities of the thing in hand. We are tempted to illustrate for the sake of the illustration, its beauty, its novelty, its eccentricity. We are tempted to illustrate for the sake of rhetorical display display of ingenuity, of learning, of originality. We are tempted to illustrate for the entertainment of an audience. We are tempted to fill in with anecdote for the sake of the story, not because the thing in hand demands the anecdote. You all know a certain popular lecturer, whose passion for anecdote is so great as to have degenerated into what De Quincey calls "anecdotage." Illustrative stories have so multiplied in number, that now the larger portion of the time spent in listening to him is devoted to laughter at his jocular coruscations. His hearers find that their digestion improves more than their culture. All these forms of illustrative digression are claptrap. That they can be linked logically to the subject does not save them from the charge. Every thing conceivable can be linked logically to every other thing by some sort of underground connections. Such illustrations do not advance the subject. They do not carry it: it carries them.

Further: digression may take the form of a deliberate

change of theme. In such a case the unity of the discussion, and all other qualities of intense discourse are sacrificed to the single purpose of pricking the ears of an audience. Rowland Hill used to practice and defend this as a legitimate expedient in the pulpit. He claimed the right to introduce any number of doctrines into a sermon, if he found the variety necessary to sustain the flagging interest of the hearers. With a delicacy of taste equaled only by the severity of his logic, he himself compared his homiletic policy to the process of milking cows. Said he, "The gospel is an excellent milch cow, which always gives plenty of milk, and of the best quality. I first pull at justification; then I give a plug at adoption, and afterwards a tit at sanctification; and so on, till I have filled my pail with gospel milk." "Gospel milk," indeed! We are told that the gospel is to be preached to babes; but are calves specified? The bovine theory of preaching is not Pauline.

2d, The second characteristic of a good development is pertinency. The Rev. William Jay relates that he once delivered a speech before the Bible Society in Bath, and, soon after, a committee of the society waited upon him to ask for the publication "of so much of the speech as related to the subject in hand."

The following points may be noted as things which will illustrate themselves in your practice.

(1) Strict unity will commonly secure pertinency of development. If discourse holds to one thing, it will probably be *the* one thing which the division proposes. Rarely will an educated preacher state one thing, and then at the very start discuss another thing. The arrow when on the string is usually aimed right. Guard unity by intense composing, and pertinency will probably follow.

(2) Irrelevancy of material often concerns only its location. Remarks are often relevant to a different division from that under which they occur. Not the choice of material, but its locality, is in fault. It is relevant to the subject, but belongs there, not here.

(3) Irrelevancy of material is often limited to isolated remarks. It seldom covers whole pages consecutively. It blotches them over with single remarks in which the preacher has written with momentary languor; and the progress of thought is impeded accordingly. Is it necessary to correct such isolated examples of irrelevant remark? What harm do they do? I answer, They are to discourse what excessive friction is to machinery. Intense discourse does not tolerate these fragmentary impertinences, and intense impression is always impaired by them.

(4) The habit of precise and intense thinking will tend to adjust the details of a development as rigidly as it plans the outline of a sermon. Why should it not do so? Every sentence of a sermon is a subdivision of something. The same law of close thinking should govern the species as the genus. Yet just here occurs the collapse in the power of many sermons. Good plans are feebly executed. Many minds, as I have before remarked, think vigorously in outlines, but languidly in details. They become enervated when they pass from the work of the scholar to the work of the orator. Any one of us could have constructed what Milton calls "The Argument" of the "Paradise Lost;" but only Milton could produce the poem. Similar is the difference of which we are often sensible in passing from scholarship to oratory, from logic to rhetoric, from reasoning to persuasion.

What is the obvious remedy? Simply that sturdy

thinking should hold its own to the end. One reason that the Puritan preaching of the seventeenth century was so vivacious, in spite of its prolixity, was that its thinking was so vigorous. It could suspend argument to interweave illustration, anecdote, biography, history, any thing which would illumine the train of thought, without a break in that train, and without the creation of any sense of irrelevance. This was done with such unconscious adroitness, that the sense of consecutiveness was seldom lost. In no other way than by this intensity of thinking power could the prolix sermons of the Puritan divines have commanded the hearing they received from popular multitudes.

(5) Rhetorical pertinence often requires that a development shall receive a more vigorous treatment than is demanded by the mere connections of logic. Logical sequence may be indirect and yet unbroken. Rhetorical force may be so diluted by indirectness as to evaporate in commonplaces. Logic deals with the intellect pure and simple; rhetoric deals chiefly with the sensibilities. Intellect may thread the mazes of a languid development, provided that logic be kept unbroken; the sensibilities can not always do that. They do not readily obey threadlike and tortuous lines of connection. They require obvious continuity. They often demand close proximity to the object of their excitement. They are roused by boldness of representation. They are stimulated by high coloring. They sometimes need contrasts of coloring, in which the mind passes back and forth with unconscious speed. To preserve absolute pertinence of material in such a process is a far more difficult achievement than to forge the links of an argument. It requires more nervous thinking power.

3d, A third characteristic of a good development is completeness. The development is to the division in hand what the divisions collectively are to the proposition. The one should exhaust the other.

(1) Completeness of development, then, may be obviously sacrificed by the omission of a necessary link in the argument.

(2) It may also be sacrificed by an inadequate statement of the strong point in an argument. A development should not claim less than it really proves. A preacher who had Daniel Webster for a hearer once preached on the evidences of Christianity. One division of the discourse was devoted to the testimony of the sacred writers themselves. This was amplified so forcibly, that Mr. Webster saw the reach of it beyond the claim of the preacher. The preacher rested his case on this alternative: "Either Christianity is true, or the sacred writers were deluded men." — "No," said Mr. Webster, "the alternative is stronger than that, — either Christianity is true, or the Apostles were knaves. Their testimony is credible, or it is downright fraud." If candor forbids a preacher to claim more than he proves, fidelity forbids him to claim less.

(3) Completeness of development is impaired by a want of clearness of connection. Certain passages in every prolonged discourse have no other purpose than to make connections. Certain sentences, paragraphs, pages are to a discourse as a whole what certain words in every vocabulary are to the rest: they are simply connectives. By themselves they are forceless; yet without them discourse would be impossible. Without them, men could commune with each other only in ejaculations. They are joints, which make discourse continuous and flexible. These transitional passages

are often carelessly constructed; and the result is a sense of inconsequence in the progress of thought.

(4) Completeness of development is further sacrificed by a want of forcible presentation. Materials may be unified, pertinent, connected, and yet may fail for the want of vividness. Generally the defect is the want of illustration. Pure argument seldom does itself justice before the popular mind. The same is true of purely didactic explanation. No man can discourse orally upon pure mathematics. The illustrative element in popular discourse is necessary to completeness, because it is necessary to forcible impression. Frequently the only change which criticism can suggest in a development which fails of its object is not in the stock of it, nor in its frame-work, but in its temperature. It is constructed of good material, and is well jointed; but it wants glow. It needs to be recomposed to gain intensity. The excellences which it has will not come forth palpably to the popular eye without red heat.

(5) This suggests that completeness of development is often sacrificed by excessive qualifications of truth. Qualifications should never be the equivalents of retractions. The father of Samuel J. Mills was the pastor of a Congregational Church in Connecticut. He was a man of very positive opinions, which he never hesitated to proclaim. He once delivered a sermon on the text, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." At the close he uttered a fervent appeal to parents, exhorting them to fidelity in obedience to the text; and ended by saying, "After all, brethren, character depends very much on the blood." Such qualifications are practical contradictions: they expose secret convictions, which seem to be more honest than those which have been

avowed. A preacher has no right to have secret convictions on any thing which he professes to preach. Qualifications ought not to contain the most vivacious materials of a discourse. If they do, they will be remembered when the statements which they qualify are forgotten.

4th, A fourth characteristic of a good development is conciseness. The chief distinction of the eloquence of Demosthenes was its velocity of rhetorical movement. One critic says that he spoke "like a passionate man tormented by the truth." Such a man can not help speaking with quick advances. What he has to say he says, and has done with it. Thought, structure, style are all condensed. The chinks and crevices of discourse are packed full. The effect in utterance is a combination of weight and speed, and that combination is always power: it is like the power of a cannon-ball. We need much of this kind of discourse in the pulpit. The subjects of the pulpit invite it. The moral exigencies which have created the pulpit demand it. Those preachers whose sympathy with the work of the pulpit is the most profound practice it spontaneously.

(1) Yet it should be remarked that conciseness in preaching must be subordinated to completeness of discussion. Conciseness is a relative excellence: it must be adjusted to subject and to audience. Some themes in the pulpit, discussed before some audiences, will not bear extreme compactness: they need amplitude. Oral discourse in its very nature requires a certain bulk of expression. Proof, often, will not be taken in, if expressed in naked syllogism. Explanation may not be understood if given with mathematical brevity. Illustration is often needed, as much to gain time for the thinking power of a hearer to rally around a thought,

as for the direct purpose of making it luminous. A laconic development is fit only for self-evident truths.

Some of President Finney's discourses are defective in this respect. His twenty or thirty divisions, barely stated, with but one or two sentences exhaustive of each, sound like an inventory. Four or five divisions expanded to such length as to be rounded and full would be more effective, because more natural to the procedure of oratory. Milton speaks of the "close palm" of logic and of the "open palm" of rhetoric. The open palm is the symbol of homiletic development.

(2) Conciseness of development is promoted by cultivation of the condensing power. A condensed style *is* concise development. But I mean more than this. Every expedient which reduces circumlocutory expression promotes the power and the habit of condensed thinking. A taste for short words, for Saxon words, for unqualified substantives, for crisp sentences, helps the thinking power to work in close quarters. A writer who acquires a fondness for speaking brevities learns to think in brevities. Happy is the man whose habit it is to think laconically. There are few things in which the re-action of style on thought and on the thinking force is so obvious as in the growth of this condensing power.

(3) Conciseness of development depends chiefly on a wise retrenchment of materials. The work is mainly negative. Eliminate superfluous thoughts, say only necessary things, depend on selection, not on conglomeration of materials, and conciseness is inevitable. For example, avoid needless explanations. We observed the necessity of this in expository discourse. It is equally needful in all explanatory development. Assume all that can safely be assumed of the intelli-

gence of the hearer. On the same principle, avoid proof of things which can safely be assumed. A wise preacher studies when to argue, and when to dictate. Do not try to prove that men are sinners, that time is short, that death is certain, that eternity is important, that truth is right. The most stupendous truths, and sometimes the most bitterly contested, must generally be assumed in preaching. The being of God, the necessity of revelation, the authority of conscience, the truth of the Scriptures, the facts of heaven and of hell must commonly be proclaimed by assumption.

So of the countless minor threads of thought which make up the woof of sermons: speak by authority when there is no need of argument: assume as much as possible of existing belief in the hearer's mind. Avoid preaching to absent opponents. Some preachers are always in war-paint; all subjects open to them controversially. They find it difficult to develop a subject pacifically. A vast amount of needless expansion in sermons would be saved, if preachers would on some subjects instruct and illustrate more, and argue and contend less. For the same reason, avoid giving to infidelity an undue eminence in the labors of the pulpit. Specially if a preacher has been himself a skeptic, is he apt to exhibit an excessive sympathy with skeptics in his preaching by incessantly preaching to them or at them. A wise retrenchment of such materials would throw out from many sermons remarks which are relevant only to an absent audience.

Note here a brief *excursus* on the true relation of preaching to skeptics. The preaching of the Rev. Albert Barnes betrayed to the last his own early experience of infidelity. It was the chief defect in his otherwise masterly pulpit. Argument needed by infi-

dels only was poured out in profusion, often when, probably, not a hearer was present who could be directly benefited by it. It was done in a masterly way; the only difficulty was that it was addressed to an assembly of believers. It may be generally assumed that the hearers of the gospel are at least nominal Christians. As a rule, skeptics and infidels are not frequenters of churches. The abandonment of the house of God generally precedes the development of skepticism.

Moreover, skeptics are not so numerous in any Christian country as they are often imagined to be. Minorities have the gift of speech inordinately developed: they are very apt to vociferate, and are often estimated by the noise they make. Did you ever sit in the twilight in the autumn, when three or four crickets were serenading each other? They made the whole house ring: one would think that they were a thousand strong. So we exaggerate the numbers and the strength of infidelity, so far as the masses of the people are concerned. They are not unbelievers on any large scale, and never have been. Indifferentism is not infidelity. Skepticism is never popular: it is aristocratic, rather. We over-estimate it, if we judge it by the airs it puts on. Therefore be wary in preaching against infidelity. Do it thoroughly when it must be done, but do it rarely. Do not be for ever firing with a telescopic rifle at a foe invisible to the naked eye. Didactic preaching of the truth is a much more direct and brief process than the pursuit and overthrow of error. Very much of useless expansion in sermons would be avoided, if we should preach to believers more, and to unbelievers less.

For similar reasons, avoid illustration beyond the

necessities of the case. The common stock of thought in sermons contains much which needs no illustration, more which needs but momentary illustration, and but little which needs illustration piled on illustration. The true medium is variable: it varies with subject; it varies with audience. Even when excess of illustration does not amount to intentional digression, it may sacrifice that compact union of weight and bulk which is requisite to swift movement and effective stroke.

On the same principle, avoid useless repetitions. Some repetitions popular discourse must have. The one thought repeated with variations is the staple of many sermons. Dr. Chalmers's discourses are largely of this kind. They are revolving-lights. Admitting the necessity of such productions, we must offset it by a stringent check upon excess in the use of them. Repeat, if necessary for emphasis. Practice variations on one thought, if necessary to gain time for growth of interest; but, as soon as your point is gained, drop it, and pass on. By thus retrenching superfluous materials, and materials of secondary worth, depending on selection rather than on volume, and saying only necessary things, conciseness of development is achieved as a matter of course. A sermon then becomes massive and solid.

5th, A fifth characteristic of a good development is order. Dean Swift said that style is "the right words in the right places." A good development might be defined to be "the right thoughts in the right places." A reason always exists for the location of a thought: in other words, there is always a natural order of thought. The oratorical instinct goes far to determine this; but it may be assisted, and at the same time obeyed, by attention to four very simple things.

(1) Finish one thing at a time. Say connectedly all that is to be said on a given thought. Concentrate discourse long enough to carry the point; and, once carried, let it alone.

(2) Aim deliberately at continuity of thought. This is a matter of conscious design. Every thought in a good discourse is a link in a chain. Every thought looks before and behind. It is naturally preceded and naturally followed. To see this natural continuity, and to execute it, must be the voluntary aim of a speaker. Disorderly speech is, very largely, unthinking speech.

(3) Avoid capricious lines of association. It is the infirmity of an undisciplined mind that it brings together the oddest and most dissimilar materials. It works in tangents, and has no orbit. The instinct of logic, which is in every mind, is constantly overruled by hysteric impulses which begin with no aim, and end nowhere. It is the prerogative of mental discipline to keep down such anarchic thinking, and to follow lines of association which are laws, and not caprices.

(4) Aim at increase of intensity in the progress of the development. Every vigorous composition has more or less of climax in the arrangement of its materials. Its materials intrinsically are such as to be susceptible of climax. They have gradation in their power of interest either to the intellect, or to the sensibilities, or to both. There is a much and a more and a most in their resources of impression. The oratorical instinct, if unsophisticated, will follow the order of comparison. It is assisted, therefore, if a preacher asks and answers for himself the question, "What is the order of increase in point of intensity?" Follow that order, and you always have the natural arrangement, even to the location of a word.

6th, The sixth characteristic of a good development, and the last which I shall name, is proportion.

(1) The development of each division as a whole should be proportioned to that of every other division. In this respect, proportion should be governed by weight. Give the largest bulk to the weightiest thought. That which is most essential to the aim of the discourse is the weightiest: necessities take precedence of luxuries. Search out, therefore, the organic elements of the discourse, and see to it that they have ample room in which to expand. The heaviest arguments, the critical explanations, the most necessary and speaking illustrations, the most intense materials of persuasion, — give space to these, and so proportion the divisions which contain them, that they shall not be cramped. This is only saying, "Give the largest place to the best things.

(2) To do this, it is essential to begin with reserved force. Never expand a first division thriftlessly. Many sermons are spoiled by the undue bulk of their first divisions. Because a division is the first (and perhaps with a lurking fear of dearth of stock) the preacher inflates it beyond its relative worth; and all that which comes after suffers from over-crowding. Military men say that an army behaves through the battle as it is handled at first. So it is with the forces of speech. Begin warily. Hold strength in reserve; look to the end; and measure resources and time. Then concentrate at the vital points. Never fear poverty of thought. The best things will suggest thought when you come to them in the emergency of discussion. Never amplify, therefore, at great length, merely because amplification just then and there is easy. Reserve the most robust handling for the exigent materials.

(3) The development of each division by itself should be proportioned in all its parts. On a miniature scale, a single division is a discourse. It is a structure which has its beginning and middle and end, as an entire sermon has. A principle should not be so expanded as to cramp its application. An argument should not be so amplified as to crowd into a nutshell the thing which it proves. An illustration should not be so dilated as to narrow to a point the thing illustrated. Explanatory remarks should not be so extended as to impoverish the use to be made of them. Here, as before, begin warily. Handle the materials with reserve of force; look to the end; discover the focal point of exigency; and shape every thing so as to converge and concentrate at that point. Oratorical instinct will do all this, if you keep it clear of the encumbrance of languid thinking and heedless habits of composing. Perfect discourse is mother-wit well trained, well instructed, and well used.

LECTURE XXXII.

THE CONCLUSION: DEFINITION, CAUSES OF WEAKNESS.

I. In what respect is the conclusion of a sermon distinct from the other parts of it? This inquiry is answered, in part, by the titles given to the conclusion in the nomenclature of the pulpit. In the practice of the older preachers we find it under the title of "uses" of the subject of discourse. President Edwards and many others commonly call the conclusion the "application" of the subject, and of its discussion. Dr. Emmons and often Dr. Finney term this part of a discourse the "improvement" of the subject. Dr. Dwight almost invariably designates it by the word "remarks," yet rarely by the term "inferences." Others adopt the less specific title of "reflections;" and some propose to conclude a sermon with "observations." This diversity of nomenclature is no evidence of indefiniteness in the conception of the thing. A single element distinguishes every variety of conclusion technically so called.

1st, The characteristic idea of the conclusion is *application* of the subject to results in advance of its discussion. President Edwards has the most exact and comprehensive title for it. The theory of the conclusion presupposes a theme discussed, which is now to be applied to something. It is to be used for a further

purpose. It is to be improved as an advantage gained for a sequel. It is to be reviewed, for the sake of practical remarks, observations, reflections. It is a premise from which inferences are to be drawn. The intense practicalness of a sermon is hinted in the characteristic idea of its ending. That is not a sermon which is intellectual discussion pure and simple.

2d, It should be observed, however, that this practical application of a subject, which we term the "conclusion," is not necessarily made to the will of the hearer. It may be an application of truth to any other faculty of the mind. For example, a truth discussed may be used to explain another truth: the fact of an Atonement established discloses the nature of sin. A truth discussed may be used, also, to intensify another truth: the fact of an Atonement established illustrates the love of God. Again: a truth discussed may be used to prove another truth: from the doctrine of human depravity, that of future retribution is an inference. Once more: a truth proved, illustrated, or explained may be further used as a force of direct hortation. Here, only, in all these varieties of application, is the will of the hearer directly approached. On the basis of any important truth of our religion, you may legitimately build a direct appeal.

A conclusion, then, may involve any or all of the radical processes of composition. It may explain, illustrate, prove, persuade, or all combined and intertwined. It may be the most complicated process in the whole structure of a sermon. It is susceptible of the most varied and ingenious methods of procedure. The culmination of a preacher's power may often be seen in these few closing paragraphs. Your utmost force of character as a man may use here, unconsciously to you,

your utmost skill as an orator and the richest treasures of your scholarship. The ancient orators proved themselves masters of many of the very same resources which the pulpit needs, when they put the supreme strain of their personal force into the outpouring of their perorations.

3d, Again: we must observe that a conclusion, as distinct from other parts of a discourse, is not necessarily restricted to the chronological termination. We must tolerate the paradox: the conclusion may be other than the *finis* of a sermon. Its characteristic idea is not the chronological ending, but the rhetorical end. It is the result which the sermon is made for. Its characteristic idea, of application, permits its distribution throughout the body of a sermon, in place of its concentration at the close.

4th, This applicatory portion of a sermon, wherever it occurs, is strikingly indicative of the intensity of preaching. Preaching is always for an object, always aimed at a practical result, never for dalliance with entertaining materials. No other part of a sermon therefore defines itself more positively. No matter if it be scattered in fragments through a discourse, those fragments all point one way: they are all directed by one aim. One query tests them all, Are they applicatory of the theme in hand, to something in advance of that? If not, they have no place where they stand: if they are, they are unlike all other materials in the sermon, and are identical in rhetorical character with each other.

As thus defined, the conclusion is obviously of prime importance in a sermon. Theoretically, it should seem, no part of a sermon can excel it. It may appear superfluous to argue this; yet the history of the pulpit gives great significance to the inquiry to which we now proceed.

II. What are the most disastrous drawbacks to the applicatory power in preaching?

1st, You anticipate me in naming, as the most obvious yet the most effective of these, the want of spiritual consecration in the preacher.

(1) Here the fact is fundamental, that, when we demand of a preacher that he be an eminently holy man, we only affirm in religious dialect one of the first principles of oratorical science. Eloquence in all its forms is built on, or more significantly is built *in*, intense character in the man. This is as fundamental to secular as to sacred eloquence. No man can be eloquent in any thing, who has not, *quoad hoc*, an intense working of his own character. His personal intelligence, his personal faith, his personal consciousness of an object, the utmost strain of his will-power are the vitalizing forces. Not adroitness in command of language, not zeal in the form of paroxysm, but the character of the man, in an intense unity of purpose, is the soul of speech in those lofty forms of it which we dignify as oratory. Therefore, in a teacher of religion, the force of speech is weakened by any thing which debilitates religious character, or suspends its working to the purpose in hand. A type of religious experience which deadens a preacher's personal faith in the truth he preaches may create a paralysis equivalent to that of downright unbelief. Theatrical working has even less force in the pulpit than in secular address.

(2) Hence we find, as we might reasonably expect to find, that, in the experience of the pulpit, the most vital changes for good have been spiritual changes in the men who have administered its utterances. "Restore unto *me* the joy of thy salvation; . . . and sinners shall be converted." The penitent Psalmist

here declares the law of all eminent success in the preaching of the gospel. An uplifting from a lower to a higher plane of religious life is sure to declare itself in a reduplication of power. The vital power in the preacher is the vitalizing power to the hearer. This is one of the most invariable of the discovered laws in the working of the Holy Ghost.

Yet in the pressure and ferment of ministerial duty, involving as it does the interplay of complicated motives, a sore temptation is encountered to be forgetful of this principle, and to work with the full machinery of intellectual industry in motion, with little or no care for spiritual conditions. Preaching is, intellectually, a work of great severity. Taking its continuity into account, no other professional labor, year in and year out, equals it. It is a marvelous absorbent of the mental forces. Said Dr. James Alexander on a certain occasion, "The last sermon I wrote is the least evangelical I ever wrote. Yet this did not once enter into my head till I had finished." The intellectual force of the preacher had so overpowered the spiritual force of the man, that he could compose a sermon of feeble evangelical spirit without knowing it.

Turn, for illustration of this law, to the memoirs of Chalmers, of Robert Hall, of Doddridge, of Norman McLeod. Revolutionary changes in the pulpits of these men were consequent upon religious changes in the men. Those improvements in the men deserve study. They were significant of a first principle in the history of the pulpit. Specially were they no superficial increments of feeling. They were not ebullitions of zeal consequent upon temporary exigencies. They were not meteoric excitements produced by the force of sympathy. They were permanent growths in sanctified

character. For the most part, they developed themselves in retirement. Chalmers encountered the decisive change in his ministry in the stillness of Kilmany. His humble cottagers found it out before he did. The fruit of such elemental changes is godliness in its etymological sense of godlikeness. Serene it may be, like the sensibility of an Infinite Mind. A fire in the soul it is, but a fire without crackling or flame, — the concentrated and still heat of a bed of kindled anthracite.

(3) One sequence of such sanctified growth often is the creation of an adroit instinct of persuasion. Perhaps thinking less, and caring less, than ever before about oratorical art, the man becomes inspired with an unconscious oratorical genius. He becomes a living power in the pulpit, without knowing it. By that which seems an inborn tact, like the swing of the right arm, he finds his way to hearts. He becomes inexhaustibly inventive of means and methods and auxiliaries of success.

(4) Another phenomenon of that preaching which is distinguished by the intensity of its applicatory force is a singular elevation, which imparts to it devotional power. Are there not certain portions of the Scriptures, not devotional in form, which are so in their profoundest impression upon us? We find them to be devotional helps. Their themes are so lofty, their range of thought is so elevated yet so simple, their emotive fervor is so concentrated yet so tranquil, that in the reading the mind rises Godward intuitively. Portions of the Epistles are of this character. Pre-eminently such are the discourses of our Lord. The line which separates them from prayer is scarcely felt by one whose mind is lifted into full sympathy with them. The reader may naturally reverse them, and utter them in devout address to their author.

Why has the Church for ages chanted the Apostles' Creed as an act of worship? It was the opinion of Dr. Arnold, that "creeds in public worship should be used as triumphant hymns of thanksgiving." That such things as our creeds affirm are true is the joy of right-minded being throughout the universe. The songs of heaven, of which the Scriptures give us a distant echo, seem to be chiefly affirmations of some of the fundamental doctrines of our faith. The same liturgic strain is discernible in the most godly preaching. Certain sermons, of most intense appeal to human hearers, still read like words of communion with God. Some of Archbishop Leighton's discourses are of this godly cast. Some passages in the sermons of Frederick Robertson are of the same order. This is the most divine ideal of Christian preaching.

(5) In my judgment, some of the marvels recorded of the success of single sermons in the salvation of hearers are due to this exaltation of the work of the preacher into the atmosphere of the Divine Mind. It is God who seems to speak. On the wings of his suggestions, men rise into converse with him. When the Rev. John Livingstone, for instance, was instrumental in the awakening of five hundred hearers by one discourse, I suspect that his preaching was uplifted by the personal godliness of the man into the atmosphere of devotion. He became, for the time, an instrument on which the Spirit of God moved without hindrance.

We are told that "the chariots of God are thousands of angels." Among the mysteries of the divine life, it may be that God does in person move in the persons of his instruments. Their words are first his words; their thoughts his; their persuasions the direct movement of his will; and their work in preaching therefore becomes

his work, and the result of it is his decree. Hence come the miracles of their success. This intensity of personal holiness in the preacher distinguishes the periods of grandest spiritual success in the pulpit. The want of it, specially the opposite to it, is the fatal disease which makes many an able pulpit lifeless.

(6) You are too familiar with these views, to render necessary further enlargement upon them here. Yet, rhetorically considered, this is the root of the whole matter before us. It is no peculiarity of preaching, growing out of the sacredness of the work. It is only a development, in the forms of religious speech, of the fundamental principle of eloquence in all speech. The character is the speech: the man is the speech. That aim at the practical successes of the pulpit which springs from godlikeness of character in the man will often seem to scholarly criticism to be the work, the wisdom, the adroitness, the inspiration of genius, threading its way through the sinuosities of oratorical art. Yet oratorical art is the last thing the man cares for or thinks of.

(7) I have remarked that any thing which deadens a preacher's personal faith in the truths he preaches must tend to create a paralysis of applicatory force equivalent to that which springs from downright unbelief. It deserves to be here noted that this is specially true of the doctrine of retribution. To this doctrine the pulpit sustains a peculiar relation. Not that it is more sharply representative than others of the Christian system: in some respects it is inferior to others in applicatory power. The motive-power derived from it is less profound and less permanent than that derived from the more amiable aspects of our theology. But the peculiarity of the doctrine of retribu-

tion is, that, as related to the ministrations of the pulpit, it stands first in the order of time. As the exponent to a preacher of the state in which the gospel *finds* men, it stands in the forefront of all theology. Other views come to life in a preacher's experience subsequently, which are more far-reaching than this; but this is the alphabet of them all. In their fullness they all depend on this.

I have elsewhere spoken of the quadrilateral of doctrines in Christian theology, each one of which supports the rest; viz., the doctrines of depravity, of atonement, of regeneration, and of retribution. These are the elemental forces in the faith of a preacher. In homiletic use they illustrate, enforce, measure, and intensify each other. The proportions of each define the proportions of the others. The degree of faith which realizes one of them to a preacher's mind will affect his working faith in all the rest. They are all of them elements of an intense theology. Yet, of these four, the doctrine of retribution, indicative as it is of the peril in which the gospel finds men, and being, therefore, the first which naturally realizes itself to the faith of a preacher, will inevitably stand foremost in giving character to his experience of the rest. Lower the tone of his faith in this doctrine, either by secret intellectual doubts, or by moral insensibility, and the rest must sink proportionately. Sooner or later, the whole interior life of the pulpit must be what the preacher's faith is in this one of its elemental forces.

You will find it to be thus in your own homiletic development. The sense of laboring in a great emergency will brood over your pulpit at the very birth of a Christlike experience within you. The gathering and concentration of perils, the ripening of an infinite crisis,

the threatening of an unspeakable woe, the overshadowing of the critical and ultimate exigency of probation, — these are the phases of truth which will first become real to you, and which will measure the intensity of all that comes after in the experience of your mission as a Christian preacher. Let your experience at this point be sterile, and all that follows in the natural order of spiritual growth will be sterile also.

The principle involved in this view explains the fact, and is also strikingly illustrated by the fact, that unbelievers in the doctrine of future punishment are never on any very large scale efficient supporters of Christian missions. Why is this? The reason is simply that they do not believe, as others do, that this is a lost world. Not believing this elementary fact of the situation, they unconsciously lower the whole redemptive work to the level and to the temperature of that negative. On the same principle is it that life dies out of the ministry of an individual who attempts to preach with no heart in his faith in this doctrine, and therefore with no vivid conceptions of his audience as an assembly of lost souls.

(8) This train of thought suggests, further, that the doctrine of retribution, when held as the creed of the head, and not the faith of the heart, tends to create a recoil in the popular mind, proportioned to the intensity of the truth itself. Some truths, by a belief without corresponding sensibility in the believer, are transformed into prodigies of falsehood in the view of sensitive hearers. To the common sense of men, to believe certain dogmas, and not to feel them, is proof incontestable, either that the dogmas themselves are a monstrous delusion, or the believer is a monster in character. Then, inasmuch as the man, in such a case,

is commonly as amiable in his instincts as the average of men, the looker-on takes the other horn of the dilemma, and finds the monster in the dogma.

The faith of the Church is, in its nature, an intense faith. Belief of it tends to create intense character: it evokes intense sensibilities, intense activities, an intense consecration. A cool intellectual acceptance of it, which is only that, is demoniacal. But its believers are not demons. Therefore it is the faith that is wrong; that is a terrific dream. It is a nightmare of ascetic piety, which should command no trust, but abhorrence rather, proportioned to the claims which the falsehood asserts. The more intense it is, the more odious it is, because it is the intensity of a malign creed, which none but a satanic mind could have breathed into life. Such is the instinctive reasoning of men upon such a faith, when it is falsified by the character of the believer. Let that believer be the occupant of the pulpit, and he may create many infidels in the effort to save one. No more fatal catastrophe can overwhelm his ministry than the possession of this creed of the intellect without the faith of the heart.

So overpowering is this drift of the popular logic on the subject, that even the necessary reasonings of good men in defense of their faith are often denounced as malign. It is perilous to put into print the argument for certain doctrines: they need the human voice, eye, tone, gesture, to carry the impression of a faith as distinct from a creed. The frame-work of the doctrine needs to be weighted with the character of the man. For the proof of eternal punishment especially, oral address is superior to the press. Even President Edwards, one of the most saintly of men, is criticised by Matthew Arnold as a man of merciless temperament, because he

has left on record a cool logical defense of the Calvinistic theology. His sermon entitled "Sinners in the hands of an angry God," he could *preach* at Enfield to a crowd of awestruck and broken-hearted listeners; but that sermon in *print* has often been denounced as heartless and malign.

A melancholy illustration of this view, followed by most disastrous consequences, is yet fresh in the ecclesiastical history of New England. In the memoir of the Rev. Dr. Channing, and in certain other memoranda of his life, it is recorded that in his youth he was once taken by his father to hear a celebrated preacher of the orthodox school of theology. The boy was in a state of sensitive religious inquiry. He had naturally an ascetic temperament. In subsequent life he impaired his health by extreme vigils and fasting. On the occasion referred to, he listened in awe to the representation the preacher gave of man's lost state, and his exposure to eternal woe. The only hope held out to him was his helpless dependence on sovereign grace. The sermon seemed to him to throw a pall over the whole world. He left the church in speechless consternation. His soul was panic-struck in dread of what should come next. Who the preacher was, it is not said. He may have been a godly man, who preached in all sincerity the theology of the time. He may have been the Rev. Dr. Hopkins, who was a pastor in Channing's birthplace. But, whoever he was, there was a huge gap between the demonstrative sensibilities of the man, and those of the tender child among his hearers. To the boy the sermon seemed as one of the "rocks and the mountains" that should fall upon a doomed sinner. He waited for his father to speak to him of the ghastly doom before him. They stepped into the carriage, and

rode home in silence. He felt himself to be on the threshold of hell. Presently his father began to whistle, and, on entering the house, he called for his slippers, and sat down to read the newspapers. How natural was the child's notice of the little incidents of the ride and the coming home! Thus he reasoned: "If the fearful tidings I have heard from the eternal world are true, how can a sane man whistle, or think of his slippers, or open a newspaper?" To a child's mind the inference was irresistible: "The fearful dogma is not true. My father does not believe it. Deacon B—— does not believe it. The preacher did not believe it Nobody believes it, and nobody can." He felt that he had been trifled with. The preacher had tortured his childish ignorance by a theologic bugbear. It may be, that on that memorable afternoon American Unitarianism was born.

I will not pause now to analyze the moral influences there at work; but so much as this is clear, that the youthful hearer of the gospel needed to have such a faith enveloped in the sensibilities of a warm human heart. He needed to receive it from the inmost soul of the preacher, tremulous with desire to save the souls of hearers. He needed to be made to feel that the doctrine of retribution is one which can be held and is held by benignant though awestruck believers. Can you not conceive of a method of bringing that doctrine, and others cognate with it, home to the conscience even of that monastic boy, which should have commanded his trust, and not merely his horror? And, if such had been the fact, who can say that the moral history of thousands might not have been affected benignly by that one sermon to that one child?

We must measure the intense theology of that age,

and the disproportioned development in it of the sterner aspects of our faith, in order to understand Dr Channing's inextinguishable hatred of the Calvinistic theology. As he had received it, it had appeared to bring him and all mankind down to the open gates of hell, and to leave them there. At its bidding he had looked in upon the lake of fire. The only rescue which was made real to his conceptions, and possible to his logic, was to fling the delusion from him as a demoniacal invention. Thus he ever afterwards, in his public ministry, caricatured the orthodox faith. After the experience of his childhood, under the preaching of that age, his intense mind could conceive of it in no other way. The Calvinistic Deity was to him a malign being. Retribution was the anger, the wrath, the fury, the rage of a satanic mind. The Atonement was a device of demoniacal torture. The cross he called the "central scaffold of the universe." We must always expect to find the hostility of profound natures to our faith proportioned to the intrinsic intensity of it, if we permit it to reach them from the pulpit, as a creed of the intellect only, not humanized by the sensibilities of a soul behind it.

(9) Further: it deserves emphatic notice that the spiritual element here claimed as requisite to the preaching of an intense theology can not be successfully imitated. Character in any thing can not be imitated with success in the long run; but nowhere else is a moral counterfeit so sure to be detected as in the pulpit. Even with honest purpose, with desire to save souls, a preacher can not put on the signs of moral earnestness with any reasonable hope that they will beguile the people into subjection to the genuine thing. Not only is it true that God is not mocked, but

the people are not mocked. There is a subtle something which is beyond all art; art can neither imitate it, nor conceal the absence of it.

Science tells us that chemical analysis can reduce a diamond to the same elements as those of charcoal, with such exact similitude, that the difference is less than one fifty-thousandth part of the diamond's weight. Yet never was the chemist born who could create a diamond. So homiletic art may conspire with an honest purpose to do good in imitating the exterior of a godly character in thought, in speech, in action, so exactly, that homiletic criticism can not detect the difference between the original and the copy. Yet the moral instinct of hearers will detect it. Even conscience can not make a godly preacher. The spirit answers only to the spirit. To every thing else souls are dumb.

LECTURE XXXIII.

THE CONCLUSION: CAUSES OF WEAKNESS.

2d, THE spiritual experience considered in the preceding lecture may in some degree exist, and yet the applicatory power of sermons may receive a drawback from a second cause; that is, an inordinate estimate of the intellectual, as distinct from the emotive and the executive effects of preaching. The sermons of Bishop Butler are the best of their kind in English literature. As literary models they are standards. One turns to them, sure of finding in them intellectual stimulus and refreshment. Yet they are deficient in a certain quality to which the French pulpit has given a name, — *onction*. What is unction in preaching? It is thought so clothed in emotion as itself to reproduce emotion.

(1) The English temperament, and, to a less extent, our American temperament are not friendly to this quality. That which in legislative debate corresponds to unction in the pulpit would be met with the derisive "Hear, Hear!" in the House of Commons. Unimpassioned intellect talking to intellects as cool as itself is the English ideal of a parliamentary speaker. Among the most orthodox divines of the English Church, accordingly, one often finds an over-growth of the didactic element, replete with common sense, but shrink

ing from close analytic applications of truth to the conscience in the forms of direct appeal.

(2) Any one who is familiar with the literature of the English pulpit, especially in unpublished form, must have observed the fact, also, that an over-estimate of the intellectual processes in preaching does not by any means necessitate the most profound intellectual products in the construction of sermons. On the contrary it may, and in the English pulpit it often does, result in the most lifeless of dead levels as it respects original thinking. The modern Established pulpit of England, abstracting from it perhaps three men, has scarcely a scintillation of originality.

If one may judge from the tone of criticism indulged by the secular press of England, the educated laymen of the Church no longer look there for the power of their clergy. They no longer look to the pulpit as an authority, as the creator of popular opinion, even in matters of religion. They do not hesitate to contrast, in this respect, the present decline of their pulpit with its splendid history. The effective labor of the Established clergy is now in the pastoral routine of the parish, wherever it is felt as a social power. There, I think, a more perfect ideal may be found of a Christian pastor than has ever been generally realized in this country. It lives yet as an inheritance from a past age, when Jeremy Taylor did not think it beneath him to minister to the cottagers of Golden Grove, numbering, probably, seldom, if ever, one hundred souls. Nowhere in Protestant Christendom has a finer conception of a Christian pastor been realized than that of the old parish priest of England. To this day, we all turn, for refreshment in the despised toils of the pastoral office, to George Herbert's "Country Parson."

In this country the fact is a lamentable one, that, in all denominations, pastoral visitation has declined. In many cases, even the visitation of the sick, which, by the rules of the Church of England, is an indispensable and most sacred portion of the pastoral routine, is very inefficiently conducted. The administration of charity to the poor, a most potent auxiliary to pastoral influence, has almost wholly passed out of clerical hands.

(3) This decline of pastoral duty is exerting a debilitating influence on the spiritual power of our pulpits. Among many of the clergy of the Church of England the ancient pastoral spirit is still rife. I have been told, by those who had the means of information on the subject, that rectors and curates, in large numbers, are still found performing pastoral duty with heroic fidelity in the rural districts and the manufacturing towns of England, and in portions of London where no man respectably clothed, except a clergyman, can go with safety without the protection of the police. But these are men who are never heard, or heard of, in the pulpit, outside of their own parish precincts. Speaking in the general, therefore, it is fair to affirm that the power of the English clergy has passed out of the pulpit with no present prospect of revival there.

(4) Quietism of the intellect sometimes takes a form still more objectionable, because more heartless. It is that tyranny of an effeminate taste in the pulpit, which rejects pungent applications of truth to the consciences of hearers, as being incongruous with the wants and prerogatives of refined society. The fidelity of John Knox to Queen Mary is, in the judgment of such a taste, a rudeness which the Presbyterian Church of Scotland and of this country has inherited in the habit of its ministry in individualizing hearers, and adjusting

applications of truth to character. To such an emasculated criticism the pulpit has ceased to be a power of reproof. Religion has become a sentiment. Revivals are germane only to uncultivated zeal. An athletic theology has become only historic. Modern refinement neither craves it, nor needs it. The doctrine of an eternal retribution, with its cognate themes, is out of place in a pulpit which is to address itself to the tastes of gentlemen.

The spirit of this type of clerical character pervades the atmosphere of culture everywhere in large cities. Minds which are braced against it, for the most part, by the inheritance of a robust theology and a zealous pulpit, may still be beguiled into some degree of sympathy with it; and that sympathy, without approving such a spirit, may still tempt a preacher to evade the discomfort, perhaps the peril, of shocking it by an unexpected directness, and an unfashionable fidelity of appeal or of reproof.

3d, Intimately allied with the foregoing, we find a third cause of dilution of the applicatory force of preaching, in a morbid fear of fanaticism. The religious weaknesses are very few which sap the strength of the pulpit more insidiously yet more fatally than this. It is not easy to decide which is the more disastrous to a preacher's power over the consciences of men, — to be a fanatic, or to preach in servile fear of being one. The following points deserve especial mention.

(1) The perils of the large majority of educated preachers are not in the direction of fanaticism, but in that of a servile fear of fanaticism. Culture itself is a breakwater against fanatical surges. Its danger is that of becoming a barrier to the inflow of rational

enthusiasm. History shows that genuine fanatics in the pulpit have been comparatively few, — not so numerous by a vast reckoning as those who have been ferocious denouncers of fanaticism. The weaklings who have succumbed to their dread of an intemperate pulpit by making their own pulpit stupid have been as the stars in multitude.

(2) Every revival of religion which has been extensive and powerful enough to become a landmark in history has found a certain proportion of the clergy in opposition to it, through their fear of fanatical distortions. Good men have been swept, by the current of antipathy to fanaticism, into the ranks of worldly hostility to every "great awakening." Pulpits have been closed, sometimes barricaded, against the eminent instruments of the awakening, as were many metropolitan pulpits of this country against Whitefield. Sermons by the thousands have been palsied in their applicatory force by the shock of recoil from fanatic vagaries. They have lost applicatory invention, and become stilted. The men who have preached them have fallen into professional routine. They have sunk under the disease, which, above all others, is most fatal to a regenerate ministry. The phenomenon is not infrequent, that the very men who have been instrumental in awakening the popular mind in a revival have become the most inveterate opposers of the movement which they originated. The beginning and the ending of a man's ministry have often been in sad contrast to each other in their spiritual affinities.

(3) The most destructive disease of the ministry, to which I allude, is satisfaction with other successes than those of saving souls, and building up a sanctified church. Nothing else equals this in its power to under

mine an evangelical pulpit. Let a preacher content himself with literary success, in writing and publishing sermons which may become standards of literary taste; or with social success, in building up a church, which, by its culture, its numbers, its wealth, becomes a social power, an attraction to the *élite* of a metropolitan community; or with conservative success, in holding fast an ancient creed or a venerable liturgy, building up a church which is anchored safely in a harbor whose coast bristles with polemic defenses; or with even that kind of missionary success which expresses itself in heavy pecuniary contributions to the support of missionary boards whose names have become an honor in the commercial world, — I say, let a pastor be content with such incidental and exterior successes as these, while no proportionate results are seen in the direct business of saving souls, and building up in them and by them the temple of the living God, and his ministry, in an eternal estimate of its value, may be a dead failure. The soundest historic orthodoxy may be preached in that pulpit; numbers may throng those pews; wealth may flow from them like water, as if at God's bidding: yet, to the look of ministering angels, that church may be but a wretched burlesque of what it seems to be to an admiring world. The world of sin and misery around it may feel its existence as little as the solid globe feels concussion with a peach-blossom. Yet this is sometimes the sequence of a morbid antipathy to fanaticism in a fashionable pulpit.

(4) Probably one of the most notable examples of a really powerful mind which was often thus crippled in the pulpit by its fear of fanaticism was Dr. Robert South. A man of more brawny force of intellect never stood in an English pulpit. He has scarcely had

his equal in command of that Saxon English which gives to speech power over the masses of his countrymen. In his delineation of the weak points of human nature he was the peer of Shakespeare. He deserves to rank among the most racy of English satirists. His casuistical sermons indicate a marvelous insight into human motives. He adhered stoutly to the Genevan theology, — a theology which has always held sway in England when the pulpit has been eminent among the practical forces of the age. To the court of the second Charles he might have been what John Knox was to that of Queen Mary. He was courage incarnate. He read prayers at Westminster on the day of the execution of Charles the First, praying for his Majesty by name. He had the intellectual resources and the temperament of a reformer at his command, at a time when England ran wild in its re-action from the rule of the Commonwealth, and needed just such a mind as his at the head of the English pulpit to stay the torrent of corruption which was flooding the Church.

Yet, with this singular adaptation of resources to opportunity, he missed it as fatally as if he had been imbecile. The sermons on which his fame as a preacher chiefly rests breathe scarcely a hint of apostolic appreciation of the crisis in which he acted. Indeed, some of them hardly suggest the possibility of their having been instrumental in the salvation of souls. Why? It is not for the want of sound evangelical themes from pungent biblical texts. Some of them are among the imperial themes, such as President Edwards would have used in the "Great Awakening." It is not for the want of practicality of aim in his discussions. Many of them are replete with application to real life as he read it. What is it, then, that

takes religious life out of so many of his sermons, and gives them the title which modern criticism has applied to them, of "week-day sermons"? Why are they read now as standards of literature, rather than of the evangelical life of the pulpit? Robert South was for more than fifty years contemporary with Richard Baxter. Why did South leave for posterity the sermon against Extemporaneous Prayer, and the sermon in Memory of Charles the First, the "Royal martyr of blessed memory," while Baxter left the "Saints' Rest" and the "Call to the Unconverted"?

I answer, South was corroded by his enmity to Puritan fanaticism. His pulpit was eaten through by that dry-rot. South the preacher shriveled into South the courtier. The prince of preachers became the most servile of courtiers, whenever he stood face to face with the reformatory spirit of the age. That spirit saluted him, and gave him his great opportunity; and he rebuffed it with ridicule and invective. Thenceforth his eye was closed for ever upon the future of England. While prophets and apostles were moving in the air, he could see no other revelation in the heavens than that Cromwell was "Baal," and Milton a "blind adder." Yet one might cull from the unpublished literature of the pulpit of every generation since his day, discourses, which, with none of his genius, resemble many of his in this, — their incapacity for evangelical uses, occasioned by their recoil from evangelical fanaticism. Dr. South heads the list of a class of preachers, of which every age has its representatives.

4th, To the causes which have now been named as tending to enervate the applicatory power of preaching, should be added one other, — the cherishing of theological theories which are unfriendly to rational uses of truth.

(1) Varieties in theological opinion may, in one aspect of them, be classified as those of a theology which can, and those of a theology which can not, be preached. That is to say, those of the latter class can not be rationally *used* for the practical purposes of the pulpit. May we not now regard it as a fact well understood among intelligent students in theology, that there are dogmas which have a place in historic creeds, which earnest men are constrained to abandon or to suspend when they enter the pulpit? We find such dogmas in the creeds, ancient and modern. They come to us sustained by traditionary reverence. They are still taught in theological schools. In systems of divinity they can be made plausible. In a word, in every form in which theology is shaped, aloof from the living world, they may live, they do live. But, in contact with real life, they fade out of a man's faith. For practical uses they are forgotten. They do not constitute a working theology, and they never did. They were monastic or academic in their origin. Christianity as a living faith has buoyed them up, and kept itself afloat in spite of them. They have never caught a breath of spontaneous favor from the popular heart, and they never can do so.

A preacher therefore finds them to be encumbrances upon the working power of the pulpit. He must apply them to humanity in the abstract, not to men and women as he finds them. Least of all can he reduce them to such simple forms that he can preach them to an intelligent child. A catechism which contains them falls into disuse in Sabbath schools. Reverend councils and assemblies endeavor to resuscitate it by ponderous resolutions and letters of advice; but it can not compete with a rollicking song-book.

(2) A working theology in the pulpit must possess three elements, — freedom from contradictions to itself, consonance with the necessary intuitions of the human mind, and harmony with the Scriptures as a whole, and as the unlettered mind reads them. Doctrines which will not bear these tests of truth, no man can use effectively in preaching. A theology which is pervaded by the spirit of such dogmas, or which is founded on them as a philosophical basis, is so far enfeebled as a practical force, whatever other valuable truths it may contain, or with whatever skill in dialectics it may be defended. The entire applicatory significance of the gospel must be impaired, so far as it is loaded with these impracticable weights, even though they are kept out of sight.

Medical science has invented an instrument by which, when grasped in the hand of one who is sinking under partial paralysis, may be measured the exact decline of nervous force throughout the system. Such a dynamometer is the pulpit, when held in the grasp of an impracticable theology. Just in proportion to the authority of that theology in the pulpit does the pulpit work nervelessly, even to the extent, it may be, of paralytic debility.

(3) As examples of this refractory theology, the following well-known dogmas deserve specification; namely, the theory of a limited Atonement; the theory of the imputation of Adam's sin, as a test of character and a ground of retribution, to his posterity; the consequent theory of sin as constitutional guilt; the inevitable inference from this of a sinner's inability to obey the commands of God; the theory of the untrustworthiness of the human reason in matters of religion; the inevitable inference from this, that reason and faith

conflict, and that in the conflict reason must of course give way; the theory that election to salvation is, as President Edwards repeatedly represents it, the "arbitrary" will of God; whatever Edwards may have meant by this, multitudes of his disciples have meant by it just what it seems to mean to the popular mind, and so they have been understood in their pulpits; the cognate theory of the intrinsic unfitness of truth to move an unregenerate heart otherwise than to develop and consolidate its depravity; the theory that it is not the secret purpose of God to save more than a fragment of the human race; the consequent conception of Christianity, as being an elective system to the few, and simply a detective system to the many, — being to these only a test of that depraved character, which it brings to light and develops to the full in fitness for eternal retribution: this I understand to have been the gist of the theory held by the late Rev. Dr. Lord of Hanover, and in which he has had a respectable following.

(4) We are not now concerned with the truth or falsehood of these theories. Much may be said in the defense of every one of them. They have commanded the theoretic trust of able and godly men. I have no heart to speak with disrespect of any thing which such men have revered. More, even, than this may be conceded to them: we may admit the truth of the whole of them, and yet the oratorical objection to them now before us will not be invalidated.

(5) The point I wish to emphasize is that these theories are not rational elements of persuasion in preaching. If we wish to persuade men to their salvation, we must find other materials than these to do it with. More than this, these doctrines, if held in the pulpit, must be held in silence. They must be kept

out of sight. True or false, it makes no difference Suasive power is not in these doctrines; and they can not, by any rational process of speech, be galvanized into resources of persuasion to any rational being who can be induced to accept them intelligently.

These dogmas, therefore, are alien to the design of preaching, hostile to a preacher's mission, discouraging to a preacher's hopes, withering to all rational zeal in his work; and they build a firmament of brass to his prayers. Omnipotence, by making these doctrines true, could not change their bearing upon the moral nature of man, without first re-creating that nature, and making the human race something other than it is. The gospel, as a system of moral forces applicable to mankind as it is, ceases to exist, so soon as these theories concerning it receive the divine sanction. It is degraded into an arbitrary attempt to fit things into an arbitrary system, by an arbitrary expedient in which a reasoning being can see no sense, and for which he can discover no use. A more hopeless spot in this universe, outside of the world of retribution, you can not then find, than a Christian pulpit.

(6) Two inquiries are suggested here, in opposition to the view advanced. I admit that the points which they express are fairly taken, in the way of objection, and they deserve an answer. One is the inquiry, "Are not the perils here indicated peculiar to a theological extreme; and are not equal perils incident to the opposite extreme of dogmatic belief?" I answer, most certainly this is true. If my object, at present, were to teach the true proportions of theologic science, I should mark those perils as earnestly as these, and should characterize them as severely. But my province is not to teach theology as such, but only the homiletic

forms and uses of it. The dangers incident to the theological extreme opposite to that which I have defined do not imperil, as that does, the existence of the pulpit as a power of persuasion. If I exaggerate theologic truth on the humanitarian side of it, and distend it in the line of free agency, till it becomes a system of distortions, I imperil the pulpit in other respects, but not in this, — of crowding out of it rational uses of truth in application to free moral beings, such as all men feel themselves to be. Those uses, and a prepossession for them, and an undue, even a suicidal dependence upon them for the work of the pulpit, are germane to the very errors of an extremist in that direction.

But the misfortune of these other distortions which I have specified is that they cut the pulpit loose from strictly rational uses of any thing in preaching. They do not belong to a moral system at all. Under the gloom of such theories, hearers are not proper subjects of the appliances of persuasion. Persuasion, how? Persuasion by what? Persuasion to what? Nothing in the system gives intelligible answer. Man is no longer a moral being, in God's image, susceptible to right motive, capable of holy choice. Under the deadweight of such a system of government, — I can not call it "moral" government, — men are no more proper subjects of right influence by the instrumentality of preaching than so many oak-trees.

Worse than this even is their condition; and more hopeless is the mission of a preacher to such a world. For having lost by divine decree, and through inherited depravity, all susceptibility to truth as a regenerating and sanctifying power, and yet retaining susceptibility to truth as an aggravating and depraving power, men are by nature the kindred of devils in their moral con-

stitution. The only possible effect of preaching is to make them devils in the end, in their voluntary choices. The only ripened, full-grown character which they are capable of forming is that of matured and full-grown depravity. If the *animus* of such a theology were to control the pulpit self-consistently, so as to make it a unit in its theologic aim, and true to itself in its applications, the pulpit would become the most fearful of retributive engines in intensifying human guilt, and reduplicating human woe. For all redemptive working, it would be like an organ in which the motor nerve is paralyzed.

The other of the two inquiries by which the views I have advanced are fairly met is this, Have not some preachers been successful, who have held all or some of these alleged distortions in theology? Were not Augustine, Turretin, Calvin, Knox, successful preachers? Yet were they not necessitarians in their philosophy? Are not some preachers now infected with these theologic errors who still are wise in winning men to Christ? In view of this inquiry, several facts deserve consideration, which will be discussed in the next lecture.

LECTURE XXXIV.

THE CONCLUSION: CAUSES OF WEAKNESS.

THE last lecture closed with the mention of the inquiry, "Have not some preachers been successful in the pulpit, who have held all, or some, of certain theological distortions previously enumerated?"

I answer, in the first place, that it is very seldom that all the dogmas in question find a lodgment in one mind. Generally there is a break in the scheme of doctrine somewhere, where light streams in from a different system, and illumines the whole.

In the second place, these doctrines, when partially held, are rarely preached consistently to a popular audience. You hear them in university pulpits, but not often, in their completeness, in pulpits erected for the religious training of an ordinary church. We have read history to little purpose, if we look very confidently for theoretic consistency anywhere in a great work of real life. The wisest of men falsify impracticable theories when the brunt of practical life is to be encountered. Things which are pets in the study are apt to stay there when church-bells call to the house of God. It is characteristic of a very able man always, that he flings consistency to the winds, if he feels it to be blocking the wheels of success in a practical emergency. Bishop Berkeley was as wary as other citizens

of Newport in keeping himself on the safe side of a precipice, though he did not believe in the existence of precipices.

In the third place, the best of men falsify impracticable theories, under the impulse of godly emotions. It is characteristic of a very holy man, that he becomes as a little child in his faith in truth, when the fervor of a preacher's mission is upon him. He is then no longer the philosopher, the schoolman, the wise man, but the simple inquirer after God's bidding, and then he is apt to welcome that as other good men do, who have no philosophy but that of common sense. The spirit of a godly pulpit is like the spirit of prophecy, when the divine *afflatus* takes possession of it. Its language is, "Must I not take heed to speak that which the Lord hath put into my mouth?"

Hence it is that the large majority of preachers who hold theoretically dogmas which are unfriendly to applicatory power in the pulpit, either do not preach those dogmas, or, if they do, they ignore them when the point of application comes in the sermon which contains them. The two ends of a sermon are often charming contrasts to the eye of a logician. The Rev. James Alexander, D.D., believed the doctrine of limited Atonement; but I have been told by one who knew his habit in the pulpit, that nobody would have suspected it from his preaching. Luther believed in the servitude of the human will, and he left no room for doubt that he believed it; yet how sublime was his unconscious contradiction of it whenever he appealed to men to repent! William Jay was another of the sublime theologians. He said he thought that Calvinism, alluding to the necessitarian type of it, was a system to be held, but not a system to be preached. John Newton said it was

the worst system conceivable, if preached theoretically, but the best conceivable, if preached practically; that is, by expunging from it its fatalism.

All these godly men in their reservations and contradictions meant one thing. They meant that whatever their speculative theology contained which contradicted the necessary beliefs of men, and therefore hampered their own souls in appealing to the common sense and conscience of their hearers, should be flung aside when the business of the hour was to persuade men to be saved. Save men they must and would by all means at their command. Their theology must take care of itself.

On the same principle of theoretic inconsistency the fatalistic interpretations of Calvinism are generally held aloof, by those who believe them, from their applications of the gospel to their hearers. That is to say, they make those applications unconditionally. They do not remind men of their arbitrary destiny in the act of urging them to repent. They do not say to men, "Repent if you can; repent when you can; repent when God gives you the chance to repent." Who ever heard that in a Christian pulpit? Who ever heard it from any school of theology in a revival of religion? No: such preachers preach as other good men do. They say, "Repent, believe, obey, turn ye: why will ye die?" Under the impulse of their godly emotions they say these things just as if men could repent. Their hearers understand them as if they meant it. For the time they do mean it. Their necessitarian theories vanish while the practical business of the pulpit is in the foreground. Then the Spirit of God takes them at their word, and uses, not their philosophy, but the gospel, to the salvation of souls. This is the simple

history of a thousand necessitarian pulpits. Conscience, moved by the Spirit of God, if momentarily left to itself by the necessitarian tyranny, is quick to spring to its supremacy. It will then often lead men in triumph to their liberty and to the proof, in the very face of the slumbering philosophy, that they can repent by the act of repenting. A certain Scotch preacher, who held the theology of John Knox without abatement, had for years been accustomed to append to his exhortations to repentance the proviso that the Holy Spirit should impart the power to repent. At length, one day, his apostolic emotions so over-mastered him, that he forgot the wonted proviso, and let the exhortation stand by itself. At the close of the day a poor woman whom his philosophy had kept in bondage for years, so the story reads, came to him weeping tears of penitence and joy, and said to him, "Why didna ye ever tell me afore that I *could* believe?"

The majority of fatalistic preachers of our own day do tell sinners virtually that they can believe by the freeness with which, in the applications of their sermons, they exhort them to believe. It makes a vast difference to an awakened soul, if, at a certain juncture of its destiny, it is *not* reminded of its philosophic impotence. Silence on that point carries decisive implications. The Holy Spirit is quick and condescending to use the conclusions of many sermons, not pausing to settle their consistency with the beginnings. The practical hortation, with its invincible implications of human freedom, has behind it the whole force of the conscience and of the common sense of men. That buttress the necessitarian theology never has. Is it not quite intelligible, therefore, that many necessitarian preachers should have success in saving souls? Com-

pact together the apostolic fervor of the preacher, and the oratorical tact which that creates, and the unconscious magnetism of the man, and the truth of God which he utters at God's bidding, and the supremacy of conscience in the hearer, and the auxiliary force of his common sense, all wielded by the Holy Ghost, impelling the sinner's will one way, and what chance, speaking as the world speaks, has the fatalism preached a half-hour ago against the present omnipotence of such an alliance of moral forces?

But it may be imagined, that, if these theologic errors are so easily counteracted by the happy inconsistencies of preachers, they are of little or no moment in the pulpit. Why make an ado over them? This leads me to remark, in the fourth place, that a theoretic contradiction in the theology of the pulpit can never be wholly neutralized in its practical influence. Depravity is quick-witted. It is a sharp detective. It never ignores the inconsistencies of the pulpit. In times of religious awakening it is assisted by spiritual tempters, who, in all heathen history, have employed nothing else so destructively to the souls of men as fatalism. Numerically the large majority of mankind probably are held in bondage to-day by that one form of theologic error. That is an appalling conquest which the powers of evil make when they succeed in enthroning that error in a Christian pulpit under Christian forms. It is inconceivable that such a pulpit should be as effective for good in its appeals to men as it would be in whole-souled applications of the truth, in which the head and the heart of the preacher should move in harmony. Here, as elsewhere in oratorical speech, unity of spirit is essential to the ideal success.

Moreover, in the fifth place, it is not true that all

fatalistic theologians in the pulpit do save their usefulness by "happy inconsistencies." Some minds are too unelastic in their intellectual make to admit of a practical rebound from the logic of their theories. Of this class was the mind of John Foster. He clung to his theory of the constitutional guilt and the irresponsible helplessness, yet the fatal doom, of mankind, till it had tinged with gloom all his views of this life, and driven him in desperation to an equivalent of the doctrine of universal salvation. He could find no other refuge for his faith in the benevolence of God. It is impossible that so rare a thinker would not have been a more successful preacher if he had held a theory of depravity which should have made preaching a rational business.

The Rev. Dr. John M. Mason, a celebrated preacher in the city of New York in the early part of this century, and the model of pulpit eloquence to a multitude of his admirers, held consistently his theory of limited Atonement and imputed guilt and arbitrary election and reprobation; and the consequence was that a revival of religion was an occasion of sorrow to him, because he was unable to adjust his preaching to its obvious demands. He confessed to Professor Stuart, in the midst of a revival at New Haven, that he dared not preach to impenitent men as New England preachers of the school to which Professor Stuart belonged were then accustomed to preach. He could not offer salvation to unregenerate men as if it were designed for them, and as if he expected them to accept it by repentance and faith; for he did not believe they were capable of either. Such preachers represent a class of logically consistent thinkers and honest men, who must preach as they believe, and who, on some themes, believe that which forbids them to preach the truths which an awakened

conscience craves. A fearful burden is that under which an honest man sinks in the pulpit, when he can not offer a free salvation to the souls of his hearers without conscious perjury to his own.

But there remains to be noticed, in the sixth place, a class of preachers, meager in number it is to be hoped, whose fatalistic theology is held and preached consistently and heartlessly. Serene and contented believers are they of their favorite dogmas, unmitigated by the inconsistencies either of great genius or of godly emotions; and they themselves are unconscious of any burden in their inability to preach so as to win men to Christ. Their homiletic power is exhausted in parading with hideous consistency a theology, which, set in the frame-work which such minds create for it, is worthy of a Turk.

I do not speak with such severity, without an example in mind which you will denounce with equal indignation. A preacher in one of the fossilized towns on the Hudson River once preached a discourse on the duty of repentance, which, after a discussion in brazen consistency with its application, he ended substantially in this wise, as reported to me by one of his hearers: "My impenitent friends, if I did not know that the times and the seasons are in God's hand, I should even exhort you to the immediate performance of this momentous duty. But 'it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy . . . He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.' I therefore pray you to watch for the Lord's time, and, if you ever receive his gracious calling, obey it and be saved: which may God in his mercy grant!"

Is this the preaching of the gospel? Is it the preach-

ing of any thing that is worthy of a sane man, or of a benevolent God? Could not one preach as rationally to a herd of buffaloes? I am glad to be able to say that I never heard such a sermon. Probably you never did. The men in the pulpit who can preach thus are cheeringly few: but that there was ever one such is evidence that probably there have been others; for it is the only consistent hortation which can follow certain theologic opinions which have been extensively held. Many have maintained their consistency by silence, so far as unregenerate hearers are concerned. Many preachers have preached only to converted hearers, and to them have preached so as to gain the reputation, and justly, of able and godly men.

Making all the deductions, then, which the facts of history will warrant, a charitable judgment leaves the pulpit beset by the causes which have now been named, operating with variable force to invalidate the applicatory power of preaching. The literature of the pulpit, published and unpublished, gives evidence that these malarial influences infect the atmosphere of ministries otherwise able and commanding: they indicate certain perpetual dangers to which the best of preachers are exposed, and against which they need perpetually to guard themselves. Men who are useful in spite of them are not as useful as they might be: they carry dead-weights in the race: they are shorn of strength which is their natural birthright.

III. The power of such causes as we have been considering to impair the practical force of the pulpit is more clearly seen in the contrast with the fact which I proceed now to notice as the third general topic in the treatment of conclusions. It is the intensity given to the applicatory uses of truth by the evangelical theory of preaching.

The facts and principles most essential to the development of this truth you will readily anticipate. I name them with brief remark. They are facts and principles which the evangelical theory of preaching always assumes in practice, whatever it may be in the abstract. Godly preachers of all schools in theology, who are intent on the saving of souls, always act on the assumption of these truths, whether consistently or not. They are the following.

1st, The extreme emergency in which the gospel finds men. Evangelical preaching addresses men as lost beings. It is speech in the most formidable of emergencies. The emergency is real: the peril is imminent. The most tragic of catastrophes is in the prospect, is actually occurring all the while in those invisible processes by which moral natures are indurated in sin, and from which they pass on to a hopeless eternity. There is no softening of it in the primary conception of what men are, and what their moral prospects are, as the gospel finds them. This is the initial idea held by an evangelical pulpit. We believe this: we come to our work with this idea uppermost in our thoughts of what we have to do. A continent heaving in the throes of an earthquake is not more exigent in its pressure on the sensibilities and the working energies of men than the condition of this world is as it lies mapped out before the mind of a Christian preacher.

2d, The second fact is the sufficiency of the provisions of the gospel to save men. This is as real as the necessity of salvation in the evangelical theory. The one is the counterpart of the other in intensity of meaning. The provisions are ample to meet the emergency. This world is a wreck surrounded with life-boats. It is a lost battle-field, with reserves at hand which are

ample to reverse the fortunes of the day. It is a world on fire, with the windows of heaven opening over the conflagration. This, too, we believe. We come to our work with the conviction that the loss of a soul is never a necessary catastrophe. We can not express our work more significantly than when we call it the business of saving souls. Not retribution, but eternal life, is the chief burden of our message.

3d, The third fact is, therefore, that, in the evangelical theory, this work of saving souls is a practicable business. We do not concede that it contains a *scintilla* of romance. It is a plain, prosaic business of real life as truly as the navigation of the sea. That is not preaching which expends itself in imaginative discussions. In the very nature of the case, preaching is a sound and hopeful business for a practicable object. Its distinguishing characteristic is good sense. We believe this. We come to our work with the conviction that we have a just claim to the approval of the common sense of men, in concentrating our strength upon the work of saving souls. The history of our work proves this. It has been a success: it is a success: its future is a triumph. Our missionaries have stood before princes in this work of saving a world, as calmly as Columbus did when he pleaded for the means of discovering a world. No man who is thoroughly possessed of the evangelical faith on this subject ever has a misgiving respecting it.

4th, And this is true because of a fourth fact in our theory, — that preaching, above all other instrumentalities, is divinely appointed to success in saving men. The gospel proclaimed by the living voice has pre-eminently the divine sanction. Not the press, not the universities, not the libraries of the world, but the

pulpit, is the chief agency concerned in the development of divine decrees to this end. Men exist, ordained to this work by divine appointment. Preaching is performed thus under the shadow of an Almighty Presence: it is done in execution of an Infinite Will. This, also, we believe. We come to our work impelled to it by an eternal decree. For this cause came we into the world. We do not appreciate our calling until we accept it as a calling of God, a high calling, a calling for which we have reason to revere ourselves. We are not qualified for our work if we do not accept in holy faith this fact of a divine indwelling.

5th, A fifth fact in the evangelical theory of preaching is that the philosophy of its working is in entire accordance with the laws of the human mind. Not only is success in preaching practicable, not only is it ordained of God, but the *rationale* of the process by which it achieves success contains nothing contradictory to the laws of the human mind, or suspensive of those laws. Divine decree in the work does not ignore those laws. Decree embraces and energizes the very laws by which mind acts on mind in this work. Preaching therefore has no concern with any miraculous process in its ways of working. Conversion is not a miracle. Persuasion to repentance is not a miracle. Persuasion by preaching is achieved by the very same means and methods of speech by which men are successfully moved by eloquent address on other than religious subjects of human thought. On the evangelical theory the pulpit claims no exemption from dependence on natural laws. We do not expect to escape the consequences of their violation. We entertain no such notion of dependence on the Holy Ghost as to encourage neglect or abuse of the arts of

speech. We use those arts, depend upon them, look for success in them, as if we had no other hope of success than that which encourages speech in the senate or at the bar. This again we believe. We come to our work as philosophers as well as preachers. The telescope is not constructed with faith in the operation of natural laws more wisely than the theory of preaching is with faith in the laws of the human mind.

The point respecting these five truths which I would emphasize is this, that successful preachers, whatever they may believe, or think they believe, of some of these truths abstractly, always assume the validity of every one of them in that preaching which achieves their success. Necessitarians, as well as their opponents, always preach as if these things were true, whenever they succeed in persuading men to repent. From such preaching these principles are every one of them logical inferences, whatever the preacher may theoretically believe or deny. In every genuine success they preach as if men were in the emergency of lost souls; they preach as if the provisions of grace were adequate to the salvation of all men; they preach as if preaching were a sensible business of real life; they preach as if they were called of God, and ordained to his work; they preach as if they must succeed by the natural use of natural laws, and as if they had nothing else on which to build a hope of success. No matter what they believe outside of the pulpit, in the pulpit, and when the prophetic baptism is upon them, they preach as if all these things were true. Other things being equal, success is proportioned to the consistency and the energy with which they act on these assumptions. The more genially the head and the heart unite in accepting these principles as the basis of operation, the more joyous is the work, and the more magnificent its results.

Such a theory of preaching as is here delineated, it needs hardly to be said, must inevitably work out intense applications of truth in practice. Directness, pungency, versatile invention, studied adjustments of truth to character, ingenuity in discovery of the uses of the truth spring forth from such a theory through indubitable intuitions. William Jay remarks of the preaching of the Rev. Dr. Davies, one of his contemporaries, that he preached like a man who "never looked off from the value of a soul." Yet the worth of the soul is only one of the cosmical ideas of our Christian faith. Infuse them all into the conceptions which a preacher has of his work as a practical business, and where can you find a combination of moral forces which can equal them in giving power to human speech?

This suggests another fact which deserves special mention. It is, that, under such a theory of preaching, the pulpit ought to present examples of effective eloquence superior to the productions of the great secular orators of history. The most illustrious secular orators have been great in their practical uses of truth. As we might expect, their power has culminated in their conclusions. There they have girded themselves for the conquest of their audiences. The ancient orators threw the utmost vehemence of appeal into their perorations. Their whole reserve of might and will was often hurled in that last onset upon the will of their hearers. They studied, planned, executed, finished their conclusions, with most sedulous care. Their fame rests more securely upon their perorations than upon any other one feature of their oratory.

Modern eloquence, also, has examples of the same concentration of force, and impetuosity of movement, and premeditated skill, in conclusions. The closing

paragraphs of Edmund Burke's first speech on the impeachment of Warren Hastings did more to create and perpetuate his fame than any other passage of his writings. Hastings himself said, that, in listening to them, he felt himself to be the most guilty man alive. Those paragraphs Burke elaborated sixteen times before their delivery. Lord Brougham's conclusion of his defense of Queen Caroline established his fame as an advocate more securely than any thing else of equal length that he ever wrote. That conclusion he wrote and re-wrote twenty times. Probably with no thought of rhetorical art as such, these men achieved these triumphs of oratorical genius through the mere concentration of their whole mental and moral being upon the attainment of their objects.

The fact, then, which such examples suggest to our present purpose, is, that, under the evangelical theory of preaching, the pulpit ought often to exceed such oratory in the power of its applications. Those applications ought to be more studiously premeditated, and more profoundly inspired, than those of secular speech, by as much as the themes are more weighty, and the resources of appeal to the sensibilities of men are more intense. With no consciousness whatever of oratorical aim as such, and specially none of oratorical ambition, preachers may reasonably be expected often to exceed the eloquence of the senate and the bar, through the mere intensity of the oratorical instinct, aroused and swayed by those immeasurable forces which are found in the elements of our theology.

LECTURE XXXV.

THE CONCLUSION: APPLICATIONS OMITTED, CONTINUOUS, AND COMPACT.

IV. THE intensity of the applicatory element in preaching, which we have seen to be intrinsic to the Christian theology, leads us naturally to an inquiry which forms the fourth general topic in the discussion of conclusions: it is, Ought truth ever to be discussed in a sermon without an application? Several things should be observed in reply to this question.

1st, Some apparent exceptions to the general principle are not real exceptions.

(1) A double sermon, in which the application is reserved for the peroration of the second part, is not a real exception. Rhetorically the two discourses are one. The application of the second is the application of both. At the bar or in the senate an equal amount of material would be spoken without a break.

But, even in double sermons, a partial application of the first is often practicable at the time of its delivery; and, if practicable, it may be desirable. The case will rarely happen in which it is logically necessary to dismiss an audience with absolutely no indication of the uses of the subject for something more than intellectual entertainment.

The same principle applies to serial preaching. Every

sermon in a series should, if possible, be a unit: its moral uses should, if possible, be developed at the time of its delivery. Round it off, and apply it on the spot, as Dr. Chalmers did each one of his discourses on human depravity. The best serial sermons are those in which the serial feature is latent. But, if this is not so, still the exception to the general rule in the delivery is only apparent. The whole discussion is a unit, and is applied at the end.

(2) Another apparent exception which is not a real one is that of a discussion which a preacher fails to apply through excess of emotion. This has been sometimes adduced as an evidence of the power of conclusions without applications. The preacher closes a sermon in tears, instead of words. Hearers weep in sympathy. This exception needs but a word in reply. The most powerful of all applications is made. The silence of suppressed emotion surpasses all eloquence. Speech then may be silver; but silence is golden.

(3) A third apparent exception which is not a real one is the case of a sermon closed with a prayer in place of an appeal to hearers. This is sometimes advanced as proof of the value of sermons without applications. But what does it prove? If it is not genuine, it is a piece of charlatanry. It impresses nobody to the purpose. If it is genuine, it is the equivalent of an application. It hints at the reserved power of truth. The preacher is overawed by his own vision. He feels truth so profoundly, that he turns from men, and throws back the work of admonishing them upon God. Are not ejaculatory prayers to God, if they are not profane, among the most affecting expressions of appeal to men? So of a closing prayer in a sermon: it may be, as an indirect appeal to hearers, like the cry of a drowning man for divine mercy.

It is evident that these are apparent exceptions only to the general rule, which demands intense applications of truth in preaching.

2d, But a real exception occurs. When the subject of discourse is one on which solemn application is the usage of the pulpit, and when the discussion points to a hackneyed application as the only natural one, it may be well to omit all application.

(1) Some themes are most naturally treated in one way, and only one. They lead to one conclusion; they reach it by one avenue of discussion; they culminate in one strain of exhortation. Yet they are standard themes of the pulpit, and must not be ignored.

(2) Consequently the very announcement of such a subject predicts the whole story to the hearers. They know all that is coming. They have never been surprised by any variation of either the discussion or its uses. In such a case it may be breath wasted to reiterate the hackneyed application in their hearing. Disappoint, then, the expectation which renders that application useless. The value of the soul, the duty of repentance, the certainty of death are themes of this kind. Who ever heard a novel appeal on these themes? Who can make one? A hearer of good memory can recite as glibly as the preacher the one trite hortation by which these subjects are naturally applied. Close the discussion, then, without an application. Withhold the inference, the remark, the appeal. Assume that the hearer's conscience is preaching. Surprise him by your silence, since you can not do it by your originality. Excite the inquiry, "Why did not the preacher exhort me as usual?" Conscience often needs quickening by something that is not usual. Novelty itself, and because it is novelty, sometimes turns the trembling scale of motive.

(3) Conversion is often a work of great delicacy, as it respects the adjustment of means to end and of motives to action. Painters say that their art involves a delicacy of conception and of execution which they can not explain to a critic. It intermingles intuition with skill in a way which nothing but prolonged practice enables them to understand in themselves. Similar is the work of preaching, in that close encounter with the wills of men in which their conversion may hang on the utterance of a moment, or, as probably, on the silence of that moment. The law of the Holy Spirit's working often involves this intricate operation of his chosen instrument.

In powerful revivals, when sensibilities are wrought up by sympathy, and multitudes are hovering around the act of critical decision, the burden of one breath may win a soul, or repulse a soul. Then the absence of an appeal when an appeal is expected, and planned for, and forestalled, may be the one untried expedient which shall result in a soul's conversion. Rarely adopted, this expedient may transfer the work of the pulpit to the conscience of the hearer. A roused conscience never speaks a hackneyed word.

3d, These remarks suggest, further, that both the real and the apparent exceptions to the general principle before us depend for their impressiveness on the infrequency of their occurrence. They can not be genuine if they are frequent. Habitually employed, they take on the look either of trickery or of insensibility. Hearers receive them either as stolid expedients or as a solemn way of imposing on them.

For example, one of the most spiritless of all modes of closing a sermon is that which was common at one time in the pulpit of Scotland, and was imported to

some extent into this country, — that of repeating the Christian benediction, or the doxology. This was closing with prayer. When this was an original, and of course a rare outburst of the preacher's emotion, it may have been often the culmination of power in a sermon. Rarely imitated now, it would be impressive. But some preachers have rarely adopted any other ending. Thus abused, the expedient becomes flat. Routine is in no other form so flat as in forms of prayer. Prayer is nowhere else so void of meaning as where it seems foisted in as a convenience. When it forms the stereotyped close of a sermon, it is only saying by indirection in a religious way what it would not be profane to say directly, — that the hour is ended. The Rev. Dr. James Wilson of Philadelphia used to preach just one hour by the clock, no more, no less. At the instant when the hour-hand pointed to twelve o'clock, he would stop short, and say, "Brethren, the hour is up. Let us pray." This was bald; but, as a uniform formula, it was not so unmeaning as the benediction would have been in its place.

I once heard the late Rev. Dr. Guthrie of Edinburgh preach a sermon which was to be followed by another appointment, for which his name was announced, in another part of the city. He was pressed for time. During the latter part of the discourse he frequently eyed his watch, and evidently preached in a hurry. At the close he had less than ten minutes in which to cross the city. He drew out his watch nervously, and, with watch in hand and his eye upon it, he exploded the customary formula of the benediction: "Grace be unto you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!" Almost before the last word had left his lips he shot down the pulpit-stairs like a rocket. I had

before seen a priest take his pinch of snuff in the midst of the celebration of high mass; but that was not so revolting as the benediction and the leap of the Scotch divine.

Here let us observe, in the way of an *excursus* from the topic now before us, the true office and significance of the benediction in the service of prayer. A special reason exists, in the very nature of it, for not using it as a form of homiletic conclusion. It is the only act of clerical prerogative, except the administration of the ordinances, in which the idea of clerical mediatorship is retained. The sacerdotal theory of it does no harm to either preacher or people. Let it be reserved as an act of clerical intercession for the whole service. There it is in its place. There it becomes often the coronation of the devout feelings of the hour.

I have said that the sacerdotal theory of it can do no evil. Looking at it with no bias derived from the history of the sacerdotal theory of the clerical office in other respects, I find in it a reality, which, call it what we may, meets a certain natural craving in the hearts of a worshiping assembly. Often the final effect of public worship, with its accompaniment of song and sermon, and rehearsal of God's word, is to excite a profound sense of dependence, of which a craving for the blessing of a "man of God" is the natural sequence. The intervention of a solitary human voice between the silent assembly and God, speaking in his name, and pronouncing his blessing upon them, becomes a relief to their wrought-up emotions. They feel the naturalness of it. They volunteer to clothe it with the authority of their own devotional desires. It is an act in which the preacher is not as other men. He is invested by the wants of the people with mediatorial

office. He is an intercessor by divine appointment and by popular choice. The people will have it so. They are assisted by it in their own devotions, if no hereditary iconoclasm disturbs the natural working of their devout feelings. Did not the assembly at Enfield, under the preaching of Edwards, probably feel this? Have we not all been sensible of it in the services of the Lord's house, when they have been conducted by a preacher whose character as a man awakened in us the reverence which his office claimed? Has it not been a joy to bow the head, and receive a benediction from one whose office has given a unique significance to the act?

The popular nomenclature by which the clergy have been designated from time immemorial also indicates the genuineness of this view of them in the popular conception. Why is a minister of religion called a "divine," a "man of God"? Why is the title "Reverend" prefixed to his name? Why does the very dwelling in which he lives receive a name — "parsonage," "manse," "rectory" — not given to the dwellings of other dignitaries? Why does the popular taste, when not sophisticated by the ultraisms of democracy, always feel the propriety of some simple badge of dress, which shall make a clergyman always known as such? The idea of the separateness of the clergy from the rest of the world, and, in some sense, of their mediatorship between God and men, is expressed by these incidents to the clerical office.

Are these things relics of Romish corruption? Why, then, has not Protestant iconoclasm, admitted to have been extreme in some other things, succeeded in uprooting these tastes from the popular mind? If they had not some real basis in human nature, the fire to

which they have been subjected through three hundred years of polemic reform should surely have burnt them out by this time. Yet there they are, as fresh and as prompt to express themselves as they were when the people of Israel said to Moses, "Speak *thou* with us, and we will hear, but let not God speak with us lest we die."

Time has indeed wrought revolutionary changes in the ancient theory of worship. We will not ignore them. But it has not destroyed, nor essentially impaired, that instinct of human nature which exalts a teacher of religion above other men, and often invests his service with a mediatorial significance. The one thing in the public worship of the sanctuary in which our Congregational severity recognizes that instinct, and in which the people, if left alone to follow their religious intuitions, will cordially obey it, is this act of pastoral benediction. We are in no danger of an abuse of it in the direction of sacerdotal arrogance. We can not afford to spare it. It is not wise to sacrifice it to ecclesiastical theory. Human nature craves it, and in some form will have it. For the want of it, and some things kindred to it, Congregational and Presbyterian churches are losing their hold upon certain materials in the constituency of churches, which by hereditary affinities belong to them. Let us retain this clerical benediction, then, in the simple and natural form in which even iconoclastic democracy has left it. Let us not transform it from official benediction to mere intercession. Above all, let us not reduce its level in the popular esteem by making it a rhetorical expedient for the ending of a sermon. This, if done often, will often be done with a vacant mind; and in no other form of public worship can we more offensively take God's name in vain.

V. The fifth general topic in the discussion of conclusions is the inquiry, "Which is the superior, — the continuous application in the body of the sermon, or the compact application at the close?" The answer is involved in the following particulars.

1st, The compact application at the close is frequently demanded by the logical necessities of the discussion. We have before observed, that the logical necessities of an argument often forbid the weakening of a conclusion by anticipation of its materials. The same principle often forbids the dispensing with an applicatory ending for the sake of a continuous application through the body of the sermon. An argument incomplete often can not logically be applied to any thing of homiletic use. The practical uses of a syllogism may all lie in its conclusion, not in either premise. If, in such a case, the continuous application is attempted, the process will be forced. It will not be attempted by a logical mind.

2d, The compact application at the close is the more natural to any elaborate discussion. Be it argumentative or not, an elaborate discussion demands continuity of attention to the thing in hand. It is unnatural to break such a train of thought for the sake of an appeal to the sensibilities of hearers. If such an appeal be made, and be successful, what is the effect? The hearer's mind drops from the labor of intellectual tension to the luxury of emotional relaxation. The toil of thinking gives place to that which we so significantly call the "play" of feeling. So far the transition is easy; but how shall we secure the return to severe thinking which an elaborate discussion requires? "*Facilis descensus — sed revocare!*"

It is often said, however, in defense of the continu-

ous application, that intellect and sensibility are mutual tributaries. Transition, therefore, from the one kind of excitement to the other, is helpful to both. "Weave discourse, then," is the advice, "with both the intellectual and the emotive threads; ply back and forth from discussion to hortation, and from hortation to discussion, like a shuttle in a loom." The principle here involved is true only of the inferior kinds and degrees of intellectual and emotive excitement. Severe thought and intense feeling both tend to continuity, not to rapid interchanges. Severe thought is iron in its tenacity: intense feeling is iron red-hot. Neither is flexible like a thread of tow: neither can be woven as with a shuttle. Mental oscillation is natural, only when the mind is at play on the surfaces of thoughts. It is natural where feeling of no profound degree is concerned. An audience may be moved from mirth to sympathy, or from tears to smiles, all the more readily for the contrast, but never from anguish to ecstasy, or from ecstasy to anguish, in rapid oscillation. Edward Everett was once censured for even entertaining with an elaborate classical metaphor an audience assembled to provide relief for Ireland in the time of famine. Imagine that his offense had been an attempt to amuse the audience with a jest! An impassioned audience is in no mood for the play of contrasted emotions. Still less natural is oscillation between impassioned feeling and severe thinking. These run in grooves.

This view is confirmed by the structure of discourse adopted in the best examples of secular eloquence. A speech by Edmund Burke, by Lord Brougham, by Daniel Webster, may be enlivened by descriptions, by sallies of wit, by historic narrative, by classic illustration, but rarely by fragmentary and interspersed ap-

peals. Argumentative appeals may occur; but persuasive application is reserved till the close. Such was also the Greek and the Roman ideal of the peroration.

3d, The compact application at the close is the more favorable to concentrated impression. Continuous application, whatever be its advantages, must have this incidental drawback, that it divides force.

(1) Delay often reduplicates the force of application when it comes. The resources of it accumulate by delay on the preacher's side: the recipient demand for it is intensified by delay on the hearer's side. The very calmness with which a preacher explains a stupendous truth, proves a fearful conclusion, illustrates an overpowering alternative, without a word expressive of its sway over his own sensibilities, — except the inevitable hints of his reserved emotion, which he can not repress, — will work, by the mere contrast of stillness with energy, upon the responding sensibilities of the hearer. Feeling will rise and swell, and gather volume, till at length an appeal from the preacher, urging to executive expression, will be welcomed as a relief.

(2) Further: concentrated impression is often the only possible impression. The pulpit is peculiar in the conditions of its work in two respects. It must address a vast amount of spiritually torpid mind; and its most necessary materials grow stale by repetition. From these conditions there is no escape. Concentration of force, therefore, is often the forlorn hope of success. Brief, sharp, condensed processes, from beginning to end, are among the only possible expedients of impression. Weight, not bulk of appeal, becomes the test of value.

4th, The compact application at the close is the

more secure against the danger of exhausting the sensibilities of hearers. Nothing else is so flat as an appeal which moves nobody. Hearers are often injured by applications of truth which fall upon exhausted sensibilities. Exhausted feeling, under such conditions, borders hard upon disgusted feeling.

This suggests an *excursus* from the topic immediately before us, on the duty of the pulpit to those who are repelled from its message by some of its methods.

Religious effort in all its departments has among its fruits an unwritten volume of disgust. This suggested to John Foster his celebrated essay on "The aversion of men of taste to evangelical religion." We know but a small fragment of that aversion within our own ecclesiastical borders. The apparent successes of ill-timed and unphilosophical expedients of usefulness we know. Success, or the resemblance of it, in any thing, trumpets itself. But we do not hear much of its cost in the deadened sensibilities, and disgusted tastes, and contemptuous judgments, and acrid enmities, and silent departures, which they occasion. Men thus affected by unwise policies of the pulpit go out from us, and that is the last we hear of them.

Say what we may of the weakness, or the guilt if you please to call it such, of those who permit themselves to be repelled from truth by such causes; yet they have on their side of the question some powerful allies. They are supported by those auxiliaries to conscience which high culture creates in the ultimate stages of civilization. The equipoise of a well-balanced mind, the intuitions of good taste, the instincts of refined sensibility, the craving of intelligence for thoughtful discourse, and that tendency to reticence which appertains to all deep emotion in strong characters on sacred

themes, — these are auxiliaries to conscience which Christianity itself develops, and without which it can not achieve its ultimate conquests. Yet these are all on the side of these disgusted ones, and plead for them when they go out from Christian churches, repelled by the vagaries of a weak or an ignorant pulpit.

An educated pulpit is inexcusable in a crude and rude policy towards these "Martyrs of Disgust," because it is filled by men who ought to study wiser methods of procedure. An educated ministry ought to be able to do, not only best things, but in best ways. They ought to be able to reach the lower classes of society without resorting to expedients which necessarily repel the higher classes. Their range of policy should be so broad as to cover the wants of all classes.

We should not content ourselves with wasteful ways of doing a little good. The cost of religious usefulness is to be taken account of, like the cost of any other human effort. Laws of spiritual success are as inflexible as those of nature. That is, therefore, a needless waste which aims to reach rude minds at the expense of repelling cultured minds. That is an unwise policy which strives to win ignorance and coarseness by methods of preaching which are intrinsically fitted to alienate learning and taste. Specially is that an uninstructed conscience which impels a man to modes of moving the sensibilities of inferior minds, which good sense pronounces repulsive to their superiors. The divine method of working involves no such separation of classes. It denies the necessity of the repulsion of one class for the salvation of another. It always looks towards, and in its practice works towards, the higher level rather than the lower. But it does this by methods which are intrinsically adapted to both classes, and which elevate both.

An illustration on a large scale of the neglect of this law of divine working is witnessed to-day in the pulpit of Germany. German religious assemblies are generally composed, in overwhelming proportion, of women and children. As a rule, not one person in six in such an assembly is a man. Multitudes of Germans have fallen into the theoretic belief that Christianity is fitted only to women and children. If the theory reflects upon their estimate of their mothers and wives and daughters, the German pulpit is largely responsible for it. Such a degrading conception of the aim of Christianity, and such glaring injustice to more than half the human race, could never have existed under the *régime* of a pulpit which did justice to either. The German clergy, as a body, have neglected what I have elsewhere termed "masterly" preaching. They have sacrificed strong thought, argument, doctrinal preaching, to the more emotive forms of religious discourse. They have indulged excessively in hortatory preaching. As a consequence, only the more emotive classes of society are usually found in German churches. Professor Tholuck foresaw this result twenty-five years ago. He said in 1855, that, of the pastors of German churches, not one in twenty retained his habits of study after obtaining his pastoral charge; and that German preaching, therefore, did not generally consist of the fruits of study. It was impossible, in the nature of things, he said, that such preaching should long command the respect of thinking men. He did not speak of the separation of the sexes; but this result is exactly that in kind which he foreshadowed.

History is constantly repeating itself in this thing, and proving that it is only on the foundation of strong preaching that preaching of feebler stock can sustain

itself. Only on the basis of learned preaching can ignorant preaching achieve success. Only by the support of argumentative preaching can hortatory preaching command respect. Only when surrounded and held up by thoughtful and tasteful preaching, to men of thought and cultured tastes, can emotive and crude preaching to the uneducated have any long or vigorous life. Only upon the labors of studious and hard-working pastors in their libraries, can itinerant evangelists in the pulpit command the hearing which they often receive from excited crowds.

Returning to the topic immediately before us, I would bring the weight of these fundamental truths to enforce the superiority of the compact over the continuous application, by the fact that it is less liable to the danger of exhausting, and thus disgusting, the sensibilities of hearers. This is the great peril of a hortatory sermon.

We are slow to believe that men have none too much power of feeling. No man has any sensibility to waste. Sensibility is not the ultimate faculty of our being. It is a tributary. It is the motive force to executive action. The supreme faculty is will. To work upon sensibility monotonously, leaving the will no chance to throw itself into executive duty, is the surest way to benumb sensibility. Pain itself becomes at last anæsthetic to tortured nerves. They die of pain. So the moral sensibilities grow torpid under extreme and rude appliances which do not leave them at the right moment to do their own work silently upon the will. A wise preacher, therefore, will be wise in this, using discreetly the sensibilities of an audience. He will apply truth, as a soldier fires who has but a limited amount of ammunition. Frequency of shot is less to be regarded than efficiency of shot.

This economy of sensibilities is also urged by another principle which enters into all eloquence. It is that a hearer is a participator in all eloquent speech. Powerful speech is always dramatic. An interested hearer engages in silent colloquy with the speaker. Thought responds to thought; feeling to feeling. Therefore a hearer's range and power of sensibility are as much to be taken into account by a speaker as his range and power of intellect. The moment a hearer ceases to respond to the appeals of a speaker, that moment he ceases to be a party in the case. He becomes a mere recipient. He is clogged; he nods. Lord Brougham accounts for the failure of certain parliamentary speakers on the ground that they shared nothing with their hearers. They were teachers, not orators.

For the reasons thus far advanced, we may conclude that, generally, the compact application at the close is preferable to the interspersed application in the body of the sermon. But the general rule is subject to exceptions.

5th, It should be observed, therefore, that certain forms of discussion may require, and certain other forms may admit of, the continuous application.

(1) Some discussions require the continuous application. A hortatory discussion, for instance, is nearly all applicatory.

(2) Some discussions, though not requiring, may admit of, the continuous application. An expository discussion which is not severely critical is one of this class. In such a sermon the train of thought is secured in place by the text. If dropped for the sake of an applicatory appeal, it may easily be resumed. A biographical or historical discussion admits of a similar freedom of interplay. Such a sermon will commonly

follow either the order of biblical narrative, or the order of time. Either of these, if suspended, is easily recovered. A discourse of peculiar intensity of practical bearing may branch out naturally into a succession of appeals. Instances occur in which practical application grows out of the very roots of a text or a theme. The applications are immediate, obvious, urgent. Not to make them would do violence to the natural uses of the subject. The oratorical instinct of the preacher allies itself with the instinct of hearing in the audience, to demand the utterance of them. The sermon is most naturally made up of a series of touches of discussion, alternating with touches of application. It is constructed like a Norway spruce, which is bearded with branches to the very ground.

6th, Exceptions to the general rule of compact application may be created by peculiarity of occasion. An occasion of unusual religious excitement may demand exception. A state of ebullient emotion on the part of an audience demands something responsive to such emotion from the pulpit. The principle always holds good, that existing excitement should be used. The iron must be struck while it is hot.

Hence it is, that, in revivals of religion, hortation will be useful in larger proportion than when a community is at a dead level. In revivals delicate junctures of influence abound. Critical moments occur in the delivery of a sermon, for which no premeditation can provide. The oratorical instinct must be largely trusted. A direct appeal in the midst of a discussion may then be the instrument of a soul's conversion. No theory of art in preaching must be permitted to tyrannize over the liberty of speech at such moments. The late Rev. Dr. Kirk once told me that he thought

he could commonly judge, by certain indefinable evidences, of the condition of an audience, when they were, and when they were not, moved responsively to the emotion of the preacher so as to invite or to reject interspersed appeal. Not every man's judgment can be implicitly trusted on a point of such delicacy; but one who has had experience in addressing assemblies under religious awakening may have a discernment which shall equal intuition.

7th, Exceptions to the general rule of compact application may be required by the intellectual character of the audience. An audience of children may need the continuous application. Why? Because they have little power of sustained attention, and almost no power of abstraction. On the same principle, an audience composed mainly of undisciplined minds may have the same need.

These remarks upon exceptions to the general rule suggest a threefold principle which obviously underlies such exceptions, and with the statement of which we close this part of the discussion. It is, that the less elaborate the sermon, or the less cultivated the audience, or the more emotive the condition of the audience, the more readily is the continuous application admitted or required.

LECTURE XXXVI.

THE CONCLUSION: RADICAL ELEMENTS, RECAPITULATION, INFERENCE AND REMARK.

VI. Proceeding now to examine more narrowly the compact application at the close of a discourse, we are led to inquire, in the sixth place, "What are the radical elements of a conclusion?"

1st, Ancient oratory recognized two such elements, recapitulation and appeal. Either or both were deemed fitting to popular discourse.

2d, To these two elements of the conclusion the usage of the pulpit adds a third,—inference, or remark. On what grounds has the pulpit originated this feature of applicatory discussion?

(1) The foundation of it lies in the intense practicalness of the work of preaching. Preaching, in the high ideal of it, never discusses truth for the sake of discussion; never illustrates truth for the sake of display: it is aimed at uses. The homiletic instinct is to put it to as large a range of uses as possible. The inference, or remark, is a silent witness, so far as it goes, to the fidelity of the pulpit in reaching after the practical usefulness of preaching.

(2) This is seen in the fact that the use of the inference, or remark, brings to practical bearings a large range of abstract themes which can not be applied in

any other way. The pulpit gives proof of its intellectual dignity in the fact that it discusses themes more profound than secular eloquence ever ventures to produce before a popular audience. They are themes, the practical bearings of which are developed wholly by inferences drawn from them, and remarks suggested by them. In themselves they are aerial in their height above the level of human interests. Note as examples of such elemental themes, the Deity of Christ, the Nature of the Atonement, the Personality of the Holy Spirit. Without these, the gospel is a nullity; yet they reach their practical uses only through inferential processes. In themselves they can be discussed with exactest logic, without touching a conscience, or moving a heart; but, by inference from them, truths of richest and sweetest flavor flow out to every conscience and every heart. Thus treated, the most scholastic doctrines of theology become the most practical.

(3) The inference and remark often aid the usefulness of preaching by exhibiting the practical bearings of truth in climactic order. Truths in a series admit always of climax in impression. The closing paragraphs of a sermon, therefore, often concentrate in a rapid rise of interest the practical uses of an entire discussion. Mental ascent from a lower to a higher level of interest is exhilarating.

(4) The inference and remark are valuable as a device for disclosing the prolific nature of truth in resources of practical application. Force of impression is often gained by multiplicity of points of impression. The great object of preaching is to bring the gospel home to real life by showing at how many points it touches real life. A sense of the omnipresence of truth is thus quickened. Hence the pulpit has by intuition

seized upon the inference and remark as a most natural device of sacred oratory.

(5) Inferences also aid impression by presenting a practical truth through the logical process. A truth inferred is a truth proved. Practical logic is the strongest form of application. Cavil is forestalled by the momentum of argument.

(6) Inferences often assist impression by introducing truth unexpectedly. Hearers concede the process of discussion without foreseeing the results. Says Dr. Emmons, "I usually brought in those truths which are most displeasing to the human heart by way of inference. This I often found to be the best method to silence and convince gainsayers."

(7) Inferences and remarks promote impression by inviting the hearer's participation in the process of application. A truth inferred invites a hearer to perform the process of inference in his own mind. A remark naturally suggested by a subject invites a hearer to test mentally the naturalness of the suggestion. The freedom of the Methodist usage of public worship, which permits the hearer to give vent to his own emotions awakened by the voice of the preacher, has this to say in its defense, that it is grounded in the nature of all eloquence. The reticence of Calvinistic assemblies is so far unnatural in that it stifles the dramatic nature of oral discourse, and tends to reduce it to monologue.

Any thing is valuable, which, without sacrificing a greater good, draws the hearer into the circle of activity in the reception of discourse. Beguile him into the habit of reaching out and taking the truth with his own hand, and you second nature in one of the finest processes of oral speech. Physicians deem it a

vital point gained, if they can induce a patient to co-operate with remedial prescription. Hearers of the gospel are in a state of chronic disease in which their own voluntary participation in redemptive counsel is invaluable. True, at any one moment, in any one given case, the advantage is minute and transient. But the success of all persuasive speech is made up, in the aggregate, of such *minutiæ* of moral influence. Truth works upon mind as light works upon vegetation. No analysis can detect the increments of growth; yet without such infinitesimal increments there is no growth.

These are, in brief, the grounds on which the applicatory expedient of the inference and remark rests its claim. The pulpit has in the sheer exercise of good sense originated this device. Whatever may be true of it in secular persuasion, preaching needs it for the full use of its applicatory resources. Of this the almost unanimous usage of the clergy in elaborate discourse is conclusive proof.

VII. Having, then, these three elements of the closing application, — the recapitulation, the inference and remark, and the appeal, — we proceed to inquire, On what principles shall we select and combine the several elements in conclusions?

1st, Study first congruity of conclusion with discussion.

(1) Not all discussions admit of recapitulation. The salient points of a discussion may be so simple and so few, that to recapitulate them would burden them with needless form. Recapitulate a hortatory sermon, and you reduce it to burlesque.

(2) On the same principle, the nature of the discussion may invite or reject the inference and remark.

A subject very prolific of practical bearings may need inferences to develop them. The same is true of suggested remarks which are not logical inferences. Some themes abound with them, others are less fruitful.

(3) Congruity with the discussion will also often determine the question of the use of an appeal. A discussion, which, instead of branching out into logical inferences, like the delta of a river, converges to one burning point of application, may demand the direct appeal as the only natural expression of that application.

(4) All that criticism can say to the point is, Make the conclusion sympathetic with the discussion. Recapitulate, infer, remark, appeal, — one or all, — as may be requisite to evolve most richly the applicatory force which is latent in the body of the sermon.

This study of congruity of conclusion with discussion is especially needful as an offset to the temptation to twist subjects to unnatural uses. The impulse of the homiletic instinct is to use a discussion by applications at all hazards. Therefore a doctrine is sometimes used in ways for which the discussion has made no natural preparation. It is thrust home as if by brute strength. Strict pertinence of conclusion forbids this. It is an artifice. It only conceals one error by another. Pertinence demands more than logical congruity between a discussion and its uses. No matter where the discussion began, it must end with that which is natural to the process which leads to the ending. A scion from a pear-tree, grafted into a quince-stock, fruits into pears, not quinces. So a very abstract discussion develops naturally into a temperate rather than an intense application. Like to like is the law.

2d, Study progress of moral impression. Why is a

hortatory sermon frigid, if ended with inferences? Because an appeal is *per se* more intense than inference. Having exhorted throughout the body of the discourse, it is retrogression to end with any thing else than an appeal. On the same principle, recapitulation may be too cool a process to follow an impassioned argument. The closing division of an argument may be so intensely wrought that immediate appeal derived from that division only may be all that can make a crescent impression.

3d, Study variety of conclusion. The chief peril of the pulpit in applications is monotony of form. Therefore do not always recapitulate, nor always close with inferences, nor always appeal. Never make the pulpit a music-box with only two tunes. Sometimes the most obvious reason for not adopting one method of conclusion in the afternoon is that you did adopt it in the morning. In applications of truth to the conscience and the sensibilities, more than in any other process of discourse, nature craves variety. It will bear a stale subject; for that may be freshened. A hackneyed discussion it will tolerate; for that may be the most truthful discussion. But humdrum in application either indurates or nauseates. What else is so flat as an exhortation which you know by heart? What else is so vapid as any form of practical approach which you have foreseen from the beginning? The moral sensibilities, above all others, demand the stimulus of variety; for they are benumbed by sin, and stagnant under the habit of moral somnolence.

VIII. What qualifications are requisite to a good recapitulation?

1st, The first quality is brevity. The nature of recapitulation implies this: its object requires this. Be-

pitulation is synopsis. It is the discourse in miniature. Its object is to compress and epitomize, so that the hearer shall feel the whole force of the discussion at a blow. In such a syllabus of the discourse nothing is pertinent which the hearer can not easily carry in his memory.

2d, Restriction to foregoing materials is essential to a perfect recapitulation. Preachers of loose logical habits insert new material into the recapitulation. If not a new division, an appendix to the development of a division is interpolated. Imperfect discussion is thus amended at the close. Ragged argument is patched. Meager illustration is eked out. This is unnatural: rhetorically it is false. Recapitulation is a purely logical process. It gives no room for new material, or a new expansion of the old. It should be conducted with the utmost severity of restriction to the materials already presented.

3d, Perspicuity is an essential qualification of a perfect recapitulation. Not only the clearness of it as a specimen of style, but clearness as a recapitulation, is requisite. It should not possibly be mistaken for new material, or for blundering repetition of the old. The preface which introduces it, the forms of its statement, even the tones of voice in which it is announced, should be such that an attentive hearer can not fail to recognize it for what it is. The whole force of it is obviously lost if it is obscure. The advantage of good divisions in a sermon comes to view in their recapitulation. Clear, compact, forcible divisions fall into line beautifully in an epitome of the discussion. One of the most valuable single rules for constructing divisions is so to frame them that they can be easily and forcibly recapitulated at the close.

4th, Climactic order should characterize the recapitulation. Generally this will be the order of good divisions; but if, for exceptional reasons, it is not, it should be the order in the closing rehearsal. Climax appears grandly in a good synopsis. The rapidity of its utterance, the conciseness of its style, its compact reproduction of the whole discourse in miniature, may disclose the logical energy of the sermon with a concentration and vividness which the discussion did not possess.

5th, The elegance of a recapitulation may often be enhanced by varying the language in which the divisions were stated in the body of the discourse. Variety of style is the natural exponent of mastery of thought. It is especially expressive of ease of thought. Hence it is natural that recapitulation should often vary the forms of the original statement. The extent to which recapitulation may be varied in style is illustrated by the fact that some of our venerable hymns of praise are sermons in miniature. Doddridge often used to compose a hymn made up of the leading thoughts of his sermon, and offer it for "the service of song" at the close. Some of his discourses now exist in no other form than that of hymns for public worship. The hymn commencing, "Jesus, I love thy charming name," is one of those synopses in metre of homiletic discourses.

But this suggests a caution respecting diversity between the forms of divisions and those of the recapitulation. It is that the elegance of variety should never be sought at the expense of perspicuity. The whole force of this expedient of logic depends upon its being seen to be what it is.

6th, In extemporaneous preaching the recapitulation

should be thoroughly committed to memory. This is self-evident; but ridiculous scenes sometimes occur from neglect of it. Especially if the force of recapitulation depends upon the order of climax, a failure of memory is equivalent to a failure of logic. The late Rev. Dr. B—— of Philadelphia once preached an extemporaneous sermon in which he attempted to recapitulate his arguments in the order of climax. He had developed them to his satisfaction in the body of the sermon, and then, by a self-delusion which we can all understand, he assumed that materials which had been so successfully treated would not forsake him, and he remarked with the confidence of assured logic, "We have seen that not only is this true, and that true, and the third, the fourth, the fifth positions also true, but we have seen that it is true that — that — hm — that even — hm" — But it was in vain: the cap of the climax was no longer extant. It had gone the way of the lost arts. His frantic gesture with the whole arm aloft could not rediscover it. How to close that recapitulation was the agony of the moment. "Well, doctor, how did you close it?" his friend inquired. "Oh, I invented some flat piece of impertinence which deceived nobody. My failure was the town talk before night."

IX. What qualities are requisite to the construction and development of the inference and remark?

Why are these two things classed together? and in what do they differ? Rhetorically they do not differ, and therefore they are classified as one. Logically they differ, and therefore they are not synonyms. Both are rhetorical sequences from the body of the sermon. An inference is a logical sequence: a remark is a suggested sequence. Both are rhetorically related to the discussion as consequent to antecedent. The following principles should regulate them.

1st, They should be *legitimate* sequences from the body of the sermon. The inference should be what it professes to be, — a logical sequence. The remark should be all that it professes to be, — a natural suggestion from the sermon. It is no objection to a remark, that it is not a logical deduction from the discussion, and it should not be introduced as an inference. So of an inference, it is not sufficient that it be suggested naturally by the discussion; and we fall short of its claims if we introduce it as a remark only. Call each by its right name, and make each all that is claimed for it. The late Rev. Dr. Skinner of New York was so exact in his nomenclature, that he would say of a series of applicatory materials at the end, "I shall now close this discourse with a notice of three inferences and one remark." The announcement was needlessly formal; but the distinction was essential.

(1) The excitement of composition easily deceives a preacher respecting the logical and natural relations of his theme. Truths may be associated in his mind by circuitous lines of connection not obvious to hearers: therefore he may remark that in a conclusion which to a hearer may seem to have no legitimate connection with the subject. Some of the inferences of Dr. Dwight have been criticised as illogical; whereas they might stand as remarks, without censure.

(2) Sometimes the legitimate connection of conclusion with subject lies outside of the range of the discussion. The connection may exist; it may be legitimate. The inference may be logical: the remark may be natural. But the discussion may not have established the connection of either. Are such materials legitimate in a conclusion? No. The properties of a hyperbola have a legitimate connection with a cone; but a dis-

cussion of the parabola does not establish that connection. No logical mind, therefore, would discuss the properties of the hyperbola under the head of the parabola. So, in homiletic conclusions, the *nexus* of the inference or remark with the subject is not legitimate to the hearer, if it lies outside of the discussion. The hearer has only that to guide him to logical or natural sequences. He can see only straight on. What the preacher may see in secret connection with the subject is nothing to the point. The actual range of the discussion, not the possible range of the subject, governs the hearer's range of thought. He has a right always to presume that a remark or an inference is a result of the discussion. If that presumption is often falsified, confidence in a preacher's logical faculty is impaired.

Let it be observed here, that the authority of the pulpit with hearers depends largely on the reputation which preachers establish for the integrity of their logical power. No other intellectual quality equals this of logical reasoning power in giving to a clergyman the authority which the pulpit needs to make it a power of control. A genius in illustrative power may be very popular as a preacher; but he is never an authority, if his logical faculty is weak.

A young preacher was, not long ago, very flatteringly recommended to the vacant pulpit of a large Presbyterian church in a Western city. The chairman of the committee of supply wrote to inquire about his character when a member of this seminary. "We have heard," wrote the keen judge of good preaching, "that Mr. B—— constructs his sermons by first collecting a number of telling illustrations, and then builds his sermon around them. Is this true? If it is, he is not the man for us." The man in question, it is true, was

noted for his illustrative invention. It was disproportionately developed as related to his reasoning power. Some sagacious hearer had detected the disproportion, and had fastened upon him the label of the criticism I have quoted. It may require years to enable him to outlive it.

Incidental to this topic of the legitimacy of conclusions is the inquiry, "May an inference or remark be derived from only a part of the discussion?" I answer: Yes, if the inference is logical, or the remark natural to a part of the discussion. Sometimes you will discover that every division of the body of a sermon suggests something peculiar to itself in the way of practical observation. The conclusion branches out from them like the spokes from the hub of a wheel, all fitted to the purpose, but no two fastened to the hub at the same point. The perfect use of a discussion may depend on its being applied thus with differences of leverage.

2d, An inference or remark should be *forcibly* deduced from the discussion which precedes it.

(1) Legitimacy of deduction is not the equivalent of force. A perfectly logical inference may be far-fetched: a perfectly natural remark may be feeble. We want the practical results of a discussion in striking lights. A conclusion should be a specialty of the subject. It should, therefore, seize upon the strong points of the discussion, and only those. Inferences and remarks should always be selected materials, never a conglomeration.

(2) This suggests the radical defect of certain conclusions which are otherwise faultless, — that they are not characteristic conclusions. Lord Brougham said of Junius, that his delineations of character were severe,

yet weak, because they were severe abstractions. They would fit one bad man as well as another. They hit nobody, because they hit everybody. They were character, instead of characters. Similar is the defect of certain homiletic applications. In their logic you detect no flaw. Their connections with the subjects in hand you can not pronounce unnatural. You can not say that in themselves they are unimportant. Still, forcible conclusions they are not, because they are not characteristic conclusions. Did a group of Chinese or Japanese faces never impress you with a sense of monotony? They all looked alike. They were individualities like other men; but your unpracticed eye could not see behind the one mask of the national portrait. So homiletic applications impress a hearer who discerns in them no idiosyncrasies created by connection with the subject in hand. They do not grasp the strong points of application, and only those. They might often be interchanged, — the peroration of one discourse for that of another, — and the effect would not be varied. It might be legitimate in both, yet forcible in neither.

An example of this defect, which is met with not infrequently, will illustrate it. You sometimes hear a preacher remark in his conclusion, "We see the importance of meditation on this subject;" and on this inference he proceeds to enlarge. This inference, or its equivalent, introduces the closing appeal in scores of sermons. Yet what force has it? Every subject which is fit for discussion in the pulpit deserves meditation. The inference might be appended to every sermon; but in the large majority of cases it would be nerveless, because it has no individuality. One preacher frequently closed a sermon with the remark, "We see the importance of preaching on this subject." What

force can such a remark have? None, unless the subject be one on which the right or propriety of preaching is doubted. It might properly close a sermon on the Seventh Commandment; but to the vast majority of conclusions it has no forcible because no characteristic pertinence. That you do preach on a subject assumes the importance of doing so. To defend your doing it implies that it needs defense.

(3) Care in selecting forcible materials for inferences and remarks is the more necessary, because many of the most essential applications of truth are derivable from a variety of sources. Conscience, in relation to the applications of the gospel, stands in a center of radiance, like a man in an apartment where light is reflected upon him from a thousand mirrors. The peril of preaching seems, therefore, almost inevitable in the direction of sameness of applicatory remark.

But this is no necessary evil. Every truth has something characteristic in its suggestion of a trite application. It gives to that application something which other truths do not. Every mirror reflects light at its own angle. No two in the thousand are precisely similar. Neither do any two doctrines enforce a duty in precisely the same manner, with the same motives, in the same channel of deduction, by the same proportion of forces, in the same perspective of moral sentiment, as seen by a watching conscience. It is not necessary that a description of a bad man should be true of all bad men. The worth of the soul does not follow from its immortality precisely as it follows from the Atonement. The love of God does not follow from the law of the seasons precisely as it follows from the gift of a Saviour. The duty of repentance is not urged by the doctrine of providence as potently as it is urged by the doctrine of the cross.

(4) Here, then, lies the scope of art in constructing applications by inferences and remarks. It is to make those applications represent, not the sameness, but the diversity, of truth. Effective preaching is very largely the art of putting things. It is not invention nor discovery so much as the apt placing of familiar things. We care little for the genus of any thing. We crave species. We do not admire the genus flora: we enjoy elms, maples, lindens, oaks. We feel no sympathy with the genus *homo:* we are moved by men, women, children. So of the applications of all truth. Let them show by logical inference and natural remark whatever is peculiar to the theme, and they can not fail to form a forcible conclusion, if the theme has any force.

(5) Yet it deserves notice that forcibleness of inference and remark is a matter of degrees. Some themes have a more distinctive character than others. The French call a man of marked person and demeanor *distingué:* some homiletic subjects are thus *distingué.* The very mention of them excites curiosity; the discussion of them commands interest; the application of them fascinates the hearer. Such subjects develop into strongly-marked conclusions.

(6) It is a healthful restriction on the topics of the pulpit to rule out subjects which have nothing characteristic in their practical uses. Much that is secular, much that is scholastic, much that is sentimental, much that is feeble is justly excluded from the subjects of sermons, if we compel ourselves to construct them with an eye mainly to the force of conclusions. Work always for results, not for processes; for ends, not for means. So shall we gain the most vigorous processes and the most effective means. A pulpit thus ruled becomes the mouthpiece of only choice thought.

LECTURE XXXVII.

THE CONCLUSION: INFERENCE AND REMARK, APPEALS, EXCURSUS.

THREE incidental inquiries occur in connection with the topic of the forcibleness of inferences and remarks discussed in the last lecture.

The first is, Ought an inference to be derived from an inference? If one inference has been drawn from the body of the sermon, may a second be added, which is only an inference from the first? The answer should depend on force of connection with the body of the sermon. It is no objection to an inference that it proceeds from a previous inference, provided that it be also forcibly suggested by the discussion. It may be related to the primary inference by logical deduction, and to the discussion as a suggested remark. This complication is not objectionable, nor is it as complicated in practice as in statement.

The second incidental inquiry is, Ought contrast to be tolerated between an inference, or remark, and the body of the sermon? For instance, ought an inference which appeals to fear to be derived, if logical, from a discussion which in the main appeals to hope? Ought a remark addressed to the impenitent to follow a discussion addressed to Christians? In reply, several memoranda deserve mention.

In the first place, contrast in itself considered is a natural mode of suggestion and impression. It does not necessarily impair unity of impression. It may heighten the impression of unity. Contrasted inferences, therefore, may be desirable in conclusions.

Secondly, contrast in an application sometimes has the advantage of creating indirect impression. A discussion which has seemed to aim at the impenitent may, in the conclusion, reach Christians by reflected application, and *vice versa*. "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" St. Peter uses in this text the unconscious art of antithetic admonition. Men will often listen by stealth to indirect reproofs which they would resent, if given directly. Like Nicodemus, they will seek truth, if they may do so under cover. They will preach to themselves applications which they would repel if thrust upon them. Contrast, therefore, may be desirable as one means of indirect impression.

Thirdly, contrast is not desirable where the material introduced by it is relatively feeble. With all its advantages, contrast involves an interruption of harmony. This is a sacrifice. The object gained, therefore, should be obviously worth the sacrifice. The material should be weighty. Relatively to preceding thought, it should mark increase of intensity. Otherwise the chief impression made will be only that of a jar upon continuity.

Fourthly, contrast is not desirable at the close of a comparatively feeble sermon. No clock always strikes twelve. We all preach some sermons the intellectual constitution of which needs tonics. Discretion must be exercised when we come to the application of such sermons. In the application the strength of a sermon

is put to the test. Contrast in its nature involves violence of change. It is to persuasive discourse what heroic treatment is to medical art. A strong discourse is needed to bear the vigorous working of it. The sermon should have been composed of positive thought, striking truths, vivid representation, resulting in electric impression. A phlegmatic, nerveless, negative, or commonplace sermon — and we all preach some such sermons — is like a frail constitution in a man who belongs to a decaying race. Its feebleness may be overwhelmed by the vigorous handling which contrasted force involves.

Finally, contrast is not natural when the materials thus introduced can not be speedily dispatched. By prolonged amplification the force of contrast defeats itself. Contrasted impressions depend on transient expression. No art can make stationary lightning impressive. We are sensible of contrast only in glimpses. A contrasted inference, or remark, therefore, should be concisely developed. It may be dense with thought but it should be rapidly traversed.

From these considerations it appears that contrast in a conclusion may be the best material possible, but that it needs to be selected with care, and developed with force.

The third incidental inquiry is, Ought inferences or remarks to converge, or diverge, in their relation to the discussion? Obviously two methods are possible in constructing this form of conclusion, which may be distinguished as the convergent and the divergent methods. In the one case, the series has a single aim. It bends steadily and cumulatively to one result. In the other, the series is versatile. It branches out luxuriantly. In the one, the application is pointed, like a

thorn: in the other, it expands like a palm-leaf. The question is, Does force of application require its restriction to either of these methods?

I answer, In the first place, concentration is intrinsically more powerful than expansion. Dr. Lyman Beecher used to claim that a sermon should have one, and but one, "burning-point." This is generally rather than universally true. The great majority of evangelical sermons find their natural resultant in some one duty to be done, or one privilege to be accepted, or one sin to be abandoned, or one truth to be believed. Unity is so intense and so compact in all earnest discourse, that it will commonly project itself in the application; so that an obedient hearer goes away with the resolve, "This one thing I do."

But, secondly, the divergent method may exhibit the fruitfulness of a truth in practical results. Much is gained sometimes by disclosing an affluence of practical bearings. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Vine-dressers recommend one grape for its quality, and another for its abundant fruitage. A certain force of application consists in volume rather than in pungency. Conscience surrounded by many monitory hints may be more profoundly moved than if goaded by one.

The divergent method also facilitates variety of application. Respect for truth is awakened, if it is made to appear versatile in its reach, and many-sided in its practical uses. Criticism exalts Shakespeare as the "myriad-minded man." As we respect men who can do many things well, so we revere a truth which seems capacious in its uses.

The divergent method, also, may make one application auxiliary to another. An appeal to one class of hearers, suggested by one inference, is assisted by an

appeal to another class flowing from another inference. Men will bear to be reproved by one application of a sermon, if they see that others are reproved by another. Inferences or remarks may thus work as allies when they do not converge to one point.

To some subjects of discourse the divergent method is a necessity. Some themes are so many-sided that you can not apply them thoroughly in any one line of thought. Condense them to a point, like the flame of a blow-pipe, and you leave unused, it may be, their best resources of practical impression. They flash light at a multitude of angles. They eject heat through innumerable orifices. Therefore they suggest appeal in all directions. For illustration, take such a theme as the justice of God. One powerful application you can make by an inference from it addressed to the fears of men. But you can not thus use exhaustively, or even affluently, the practical resources of that doctrine. You can not thus illustrate its most amiable uses. You must revolve it, show how prolific it is in practical uses, reveal its attractive as well as its repellent virtues, unfold its minute as well as its sublime bearings, make believers love it, as well as make the ungodly fear it. In no other treatment can you develop to the full its applicatory usefulness.

3d, Passing now from these inquiries incidental to the forcibleness of inferences and remarks, I observe a third suggestion respecting their treatment, in the principle that they should be developed without needless formality of statement.

(1) Formality which may be necessary in the body of the discussion should, if possible, be relaxed in the application. The applicatory process must be flexible, its transitions easy, its forms, therefore, as ductile as

may be consistently with perspicuity. Often ease of access to the heart of a hearer may depend on whether you say, "I infer from this subject, seventhly, another application; namely" . . . or, "Again: this subject teaches," etc. So slight a rhetorical difference as the omission of the personal pronoun and the numerical announcement may assist the passage of your thought to the spot where you wish to lodge it, in the sensibilities of the hearer, rather than in his intellect only.

(2) We have the more need of care for this principle, because the inference and remark very easily fall into and under the formality of discussion. Inference, especially, is a logical process. It readily takes on the logical baldness of statement. This is illustrated in the excessive multitude of inferences to which allusion has been made as burdening the sermons of the old English preachers. Flavel has a sermon with twenty-four inferences in the conclusion; another, with fifty-six inferences and remarks. President Edwards has a discourse with twenty-two divisions in the application; another, with thirty-one.

4th, Inferences and remarks should be developed, if possible, by the use of interesting materials.

(1) Barrenness of treatment is nowhere else so great an evil as in an application. Interest elsewhere is of little use, if not sustained here. Interest elsewhere should, if possible, be reduplicated here. Yet some sermons are more interesting everywhere else than here. Some preachers are more inventive, more prolific, more racy, in every other process of sermonizing than in that of applying truth to its practical uses. They explain lucidly, they prove forcibly, they illustrate vividly; but they do not apply truth eloquently. In their applications they never seem fresh

They give the fruit of jaded minds. The conclusion falls like the dull, chill pattering of a November rain.

(2) Therefore we should never trust to the elaborateness of a discussion alone for the impression of a sermon. That is like trusting to the trunk of an apple-tree for its fruitage. We should never trust to the truthfulness of an inference or remark for its applicatory force. We must interest men in the uses of truth by using it in interesting methods of detail. No art of invention should be despised by a preacher in the effort to throw a spell over an audience by the raciness of closing thoughts and the magnetism of last words.

5th, The necessity of racy materials in this part of a sermon suggests, however, that, in constructing and developing the inference and remark, we should avoid fantastic materials. That is an ill-formed or ill-trained mind which revels in eccentric applications. Odd laws of suggestion are weak in practical results. Inferences are vapid if extorted rather than derived from a subject. Remarks are apt to be irrelevant if foisted into conclusions. Such conclusions seem scatter-brained. The credit of a sterling truth is sacrificed by the substitution of conceit for sense.

In nothing is the weakness of eccentric work more obvious than in the practical part of the business of the pulpit. It may interest, it may stimulate, it may, therefore, gain a hearing; but it seldom develops that sensible and solemn aim at results which is essential to practical force. Above all other intellectual qualities in practical affairs, men prize good sense. They crave to be sensibly appealed to. They demand to be treated like men of sense and by men of sense. No other opinions are so weak as those which are crotchets.

Hence it is that genius so often more than balances

its good work by the evil of its vagaries. Good sense, on the contrary, has, in kind, the momentum of the planets. Its every movement is power, and with no drawback from waste of force. Here lies the strength of the great bulk of the Christian ministry, not in cultivating or imitating the coruscations of genius, not in stimulating or assuming theatric arts, but in the planetary working of common sense. This is a power which, as Wordsworth says, "has great allies." Time is its invincible auxiliary. All social forces second it with the certainty and the reach of gravitation. Nothing else gives such power of command; nothing else wears with such durability.

It deserves to be recorded that fantastic uses of preaching were the chief cause of the degradation of the English pulpit which Macaulay so vividly portrays in his narrative of the state of the rural pulpits of England at the time of the Restoration.

X. The tenth and last general topic relating to conclusions is the inquiry, How should appeals be conducted?

1st, Appeals should be founded on the strongest materials which the sermon contains.

(1) An appeal is intrinsically the most intense form of speech to a hearer. It needs, therefore, to be supported by intense materials of thought. The single burning-point of the discourse, if it has one, should be the point from which exhortation grows. If appeal is made from more than one point, they should be the strong points of thought. Never build an appeal on petty items, never on things incidental to the main channel of discussion, never on an anecdote, unless it is illustrative of the central ideas of the sermon.

(2) Discourse should, therefore, be so shaped as to

bring the strongest material to the front in the conclusion, so that it can be naturally used as the basis of appeal. Appeal drawn from a closing division is natural only when that division offers a climax or a concentration of the truth discussed.

(3) The weakness of a sermon is often disclosed by the fact that at the end no other than pettifogging appeal is possible. Imagine a sermon on "The Vestments of the Clergy," "Genuflexions in Prayer," "The Marriage of a Deceased Wife's Sister," "A Temporary Diaconate." Would not the intrinsic feebleness of such sermons, as growing out of the insignificance of their themes, be betrayed if an attempt were made to close them with hortatory applications? Yet similar to these in principle is any conclusion in which the weighty materials of the sermon are overlooked, and the closing appeal is grafted upon a fragment or an anecdote. In one instance, an exhortation to promptness in attendance on divine worship followed a sermon on divine omnipresence. In another, an appeal on the duties of the choir followed a discourse on the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Absolute irrelevance to all parts of the discussion may not have been the defect in either case; but relevance only to incidental or fragmentary materials must have been the defect in both.

Appeal expresses the soul of the sermon, the very ψυχή of oratorical discourse, as no other feature of it can in equal degree. The organic life of it ought to pulsate there. Therefore the most powerful of resources should there be put to use.

2d, Appeals should be aimed at feelings as distinct from convictions. It is one thing that a hearer should believe that he ought to feel: it is a very different thing

that he does feel. Therefore to produce the conviction is not necessarily to produce the feeling.

(1) These two things mark the chief distinction between two classes of preachers. One will make an audience believe that they ought to be moved, that they are profoundly guilty for not being moved, that their insensibility is the extreme of depravity; yet they are not moved below the surface of the conviction of sin in being what they are. Another, without uttering a word upon the solemn character of the truth, the obligation to feel it, the sin of indifference to it, will so use it, and so appeal on the strength of it, as to take possession of the hearer's sensibilities, either by storm or by insinuation, so that tremulous and obedient emotion shall be responding to the truth before he is aware of it.

(2) Appeals to convictions, as distinct from the feelings, are very apt to express themselves largely in an exclamatory style. "Oh my hearers, how solemn is this truth!" "What responsibilities we sustain!" "How deeply we ought to feel in view of them!" "What gratitude should swell our hearts!" "How fearful is the guilt of deadness under the sound of the gospel!" "Oh that divine grace may melt our obdurate souls!" and so on. I do not say that appeal should never take this form. It may rarely be the legitimate object of a sermon to show to hearers that they *have* stolid sensibilities. Then such appeals, so far as they go, are pertinent. They are forcible just to the extent of the thought expressed by them, no further. The emotive drapery of style, beyond that, goes for nothing.

The most powerful preacher that I ever heard in appeals to the emotive nature never in my hearing resorted to the exclamatory drapery. The resources of

his appeals were his facts, his principles, his doctrines, his arguments, his cumulations of solid thought. These he so manipulated that they made their own appeal. Silent emanations from them were going forth through the whole discussion, which softened the feelings, and won the affections, and gave them an object to grasp, and prepared them to respond with reduplicated volume to the few unimpassioned words of hortation at the close. There was no need of an appeal to the conscience. That outwork was carried long before.

Such conquest of the sensibilities by the force of plain truth is often forestalled and forbidden by appeals of which the point is not feeling itself, but the obligation to feel. Philosophically regarded, no more sure bar to right feeling can be created than the assault upon conscience alone and in isolation from other faculties. Introvert a man's mind upon himself in the act of soliloquy, — "I ought to feel, I ought to love, to mourn, to hate," — and that very introspection forbids all feeling except the sense of duty.

(3) Appeal to conscience alone, if successful, is by virtue of its success failure. A moral nature, indurated in all respects except that of a quickened conscience, if the proper objects of right feeling are present, is depravity consolidated. Like a suspension-bridge, which is strongest when the heaviest weight it will bear is upon it, the guilt of a soul is most hopelessly consolidated under the burden of aroused conscience, if, with the objects of other feeling in mind, nothing else is aroused. But, if the legitimate objects of holy feeling are not present in thought, the torpid mind is only a philosophical necessity.

3d, Appeals should be aimed ultimately at the executive faculty of the soul.

(1) If appeal should not rest with conscience alone, neither should it rest with any emotive quickening. The doing of something is the end which we strive to reach through the emotive nature as the natural avenue of approach. To arouse emotion, therefore, and stop there, is as unphilosophical as it is to address truth to the intellect only, and pause with that. If the doing of something is not always expressed in a naturally framed appeal, it is always implied.

(2) In this consists the chief difference between hortation in the pulpit and the scenic impression of the stage. Theatric passion ends with itself. Homiletic appeal aims at an execution of something beyond the emotive excitement. "What will you do about it?" is a question which the pulpit always asks, the stage never. Appeals, therefore, should always be constructed with fidelity to this distinction. They should never fall into the theatrical vein, never play upon the emotions as the end of discourse, never rest with working up a given heat of feeling, never pause with success in making tears flow.

(3) Hearers need sometimes to be made to see that their religious emotions are melodramatic. Emotive luxury sometimes needs to be checked in an audience by putting the question plainly to each one, "What will you do about it?" The sympathies of a crowd in the street, who were giving vent to abundant exclamations of pity for a blind man who had been run over, were suddenly brought to their genuine level by the inquiry of one of the crowd, "How much do you pity him in your pockets?" So the emotions of an assembly of worshipers often need to be brought, by an appeal, to the test of executive action. Did you ever observe how quickly the tears of an audience are dried

by the passing of the contribution-box? The executive test of feeling is sure to put a stop to its effervescent indulgence. The deeper reach of feeling penetrates below the level of words and tears to that of deeds.

4th, Appeals should be kept true in their aim to the vital acts of religious duty. It has been remarked that appeals should be supported by the strong points of religious truth, also that intrinsically they are the most intense form of religious discourse, that they are the acme of persuasive speech. In keeping with this, the dignity of appeals should be sustained in the acts at which they are aimed; they should urge the vital duties of a religious life. They should press upon hearers the things most essential to salvation; they should persuade men to the discharge of the most critical obligations. To expend the force of such intense forms of speech derived from most weighty resources of truth upon insignificant affairs is an incongruity and a waste. The dignity of religious hortation is degraded, if laid out upon things not vital and decisive.

This suggests an *excursus* on the danger, in revivals of religion, of exalting unduly acts of the impenitent which fall short of the scriptural conditions of salvation. Much is often said, in conducting revivals, of persuading men to "commit themselves." The impenitent are often exhorted to pray, to read the Scriptures, to ask the prayers of others, to observe hours of religious meditation, to attend meetings of religious inquiry. These duties are sometimes urged upon children of tender age. The more public these secondary acts are, the more positive is thought to be the "committal" of the inquirer to something which stands as the equivalent of a religious life. Hence, if he can be induced to let his voice be heard in a Christian assembly, or to take

a seat assigned to religious inquirers, or to append his name to a religious covenant, he is regarded as being in a hopeful state. Under the pressure of sympathetic excitement these acts of self-committal are often made to appear, especially to unthinking youth, as the vital duties of the hour. Is this a wise policy in conducting revivals of religion? The question is often a very perplexing one, on which Christian zeal and Christian wisdom are not agreed. In answer to it the following things deserve consideration.

(1) To defend this policy is much more grateful to Christian feeling than to oppose it. In itself it is plausible. At the first view it seems harmless. In our own day it is often the policy of the most earnest and spiritual portion of a church. On the other hand, it is often opposed by the ultra-conservative, the worldly, the formal, the silent membership, by those who are satisfied with other successes than that of winning souls to Christ. A pastor sometimes finds himself between these two fires in respect to this method of conducting a revival of religion. On the one side is all, or nearly all, the Christian enterprise of the church, and on the other are all, or nearly all, the dead-weights upon Christian progress. Under such conditions it is much easier to adopt the policy in question than it is to create a wiser one, if there be such.

(2) But, looking at the question in its intrinsic merits, the fact is a very significant one that impenitent men are never exhorted in the Scriptures to any thing preliminary to repentance. But one thing is the center of all biblical appeal to the ungodly; that is repentance and faith, — a complex yet a single act. Nothing short of this is deemed worthy of mention by inspired preachers to the unconverted "Repent, believe;" "believe,

repent;" "turn ye;" "obey;" "cease to do evil;" "take up thy cross;" "follow me:" in varied phrase, the one thing is the only thing on which the attention of the awakened conscience is riveted in biblical persuasion of the impenitent. Biblical hortation never even directs men to pray, except as an act of Christian faith. Impenitent prayer is never named in the Scriptures but as an object of divine abhorrence. This fact has great significance as a representative fact: it fairly and indubitably illustrates apostolic policy in the conduct of revivals.

(3) In the nature of things there are no impenitent acts auxiliary to repentance. Nothing commits a sinner to a religious life but religious living: nothing binds him to repentance but repenting. One and but one thing is the thing to be done; nothing else takes the place of it; nothing else assists it; nothing else approaches it, the soul remaining impenitent. Impenitent prayer is blasphemy. As the subject of religious obligation and religious motive, an impenitent soul is at a dead-lock until impenitence ceases.

(4) Yet human nature unregenerate is prone to acts of religious substitution under the goading of an angry conscience. Condemned in this thing, condemned in that thing, condemned in every thing but in the one thing which alone can set him right with God, an awakened sinner often feels it to be an immense relief if he may even temporarily persuade himself that there is any thing else than repentance which he can do, which shall have in it the semblance of good. Reined back by retributive conscience from every thing that he will do, impelled by the Holy Spirit towards the only thing which he will not do, and crowded on all sides by penal forebodings, he gains time for consolidated resolve in

sin, if he may but be permitted to contemplate as a duty any thing that falls short of that one thing, which for him, in the moral crisis which is upon him, monopolizes all duty. The whole history of religious formalism is a record of such substitutions under the pressure of an indignant conscience. Religious formalism may be as intense and as self-delusive in taking an "anxious-seat" as in attending "high mass."

(5) It is remarkable that a certain class of revivalists who have rebuked this abuse in an ancient form should so often have reproduced it in modern forms. The time was, when awakened men were exhorted by preachers and other Christian workers to pray, and read the Bible, and seek religious counsel, and thus, as it was called in the theologic dialect of the time, "use the means of regeneration." Later theologians have detected and routed that form of substituting for repentance acts which are not repentance; but by exhortations to take the "anxious-seat," and to rise for prayer, and to attend meetings for inquirers, they have often created another class of precisely the same sort of substitutions, by which men have been allowed to regard as duties things which fall equally short of God's requirement.

(6) The sympathetic excitement of a revival may assist the self-confusion of an impenitent mind as to the real aim of God's command. Lord Macaulay says that every large collection of human beings, however well educated, has a strong tendency to become a mob. The religious excitement of multitudes does not protect them from this drift of human nature. If solitude in religious awakening has its perils, so has companionship. Sympathy in itself is a blind instinct. Numbers aroused to high enthusiasm tend to act upon unrea-

soning impulses. Therefore, under such impulses, the commands of God are easily displaced and obscured in the impenitent mind. Impenitent youth especially, who have no religious experience and little self-knowledge to protect them, are easily beguiled, under such conditions, into substitutions of the less for the greater in crises of their history in which the greater is the only thing, and the less is nothing.

(7) Great care is needed, therefore, in revivals of religion, to guard men against deceptive substitutions. These subsidiary acts, in whatever sort the temper of the age may originate them, need to be handled cautiously. I do not say that they should never be allowed; in themselves they may be innocent; but the wise policy is to make little of them. Do not emphasize them by crowding men to them, nor, on the contrary, emphasize them by violent opposition to them. Do not swing a flail to crush a pepper-corn. Treat these acts, done or not done, as trivialities. Exalt above them that which has a decisive religious meaning. Keep in the foreground of popular thought the one elective act by which the soul chooses God. Treat every thing else as relatively of no moment.

LECTURE XXXVIII.

THE CONCLUSION: EXCURSUS, APPEALS.

We have considered, in part, that policy of the pulpit which often urges men to the performance of acts which are not decisive of religious character.

(8) It is frequently asked, however, "What shall we do in place of exhorting awakened men to such acts of apparent self-committal?" A period often comes in the experience of the impenitent inquirer, in which every thing seems to be at a stand-still. He does nothing, and will do nothing, to the purpose. What, then, shall we do to break the syncope of inactive guilt? I answer, Do just that which the Scriptures do to such inquirers, — urge anew the motives to repentance. Men repent in obedience to motives. They act under the sway of moral ideas. Press home, then, those ideas which are the natural inducements to repentance. The idea of God, the idea of immortality, the idea of sin, the idea of penal justice, the idea of the day of judgment, the idea of Christ, the idea of love, the idea of dependence on the Holy Ghost, — these are the great central motive-powers to repentance. They ought to be the staple materials of thought and prayer in a time of revival. Set the whole firmament ablaze with the glow and the heat of these eternal verities. Preach them, talk them, pray about them, sing them,

make them the central thoughts of public and private religious services, till men can see nothing else, and think of nothing else, and till they are convinced that you are thinking of nothing else. Bring the force of sympathy thus to the work of deepening Christian thinking upon those truths, which, in the nature of things, must induce repentance, if any thing does.

(9) Let me illustrate this policy in a single detail. Experience in revivals will teach you that there is an inexhaustible resource of suasion to repentance in the single idea of God. All motive to holy choice centers in, springs from, and returns to, the one thought of God. The human soul has occult affinities for that one idea. Neither time nor sin can ever stifle them. It is surcharged with spiritual cravings which find rest in no other conception than the being of God. Therefore it is, that, in revivals of religion, that preaching is most effective which superlatively exalts God. All preaching that is effective owes its regenerative power ultimately to that one truth.

Surprise has often been expressed, that, in the religious awakenings of the last century in New England, the doctrine of election and kindred truths were so largely treated by the pulpit, and were so effective. Some critics account for the phenomenon by the hypothesis of some peculiarity in the religious temperament of the times. I do not so understand it. Those truths exalted the sovereignty of God; they made God seem overwhelmingly great; they realized God as he is to the souls of men; they brought God near to the quaking conscience. Such preaching ought, by all the laws of mind, to be productive of revivals in any age, whatever be the religious diathesis of the age.

Analyze it briefly in its working. Such preaching

brings the heedless soul into contact with the most electrifying spiritual fact within its knowledge. It realizes to the awakened soul the most stupendous conception of which it is capable. It subjects the convicted soul to the sway of the most intense regenerative truth of which thought is possible. It lays bare the consciousness of sin under the burning eye of infinite and eternal justice. It is to a guilty conscience like the exposure of a diseased eyeball to the glare of a tropical sun at mid-day. It arraigns an obstinate will face to face with the only thing in the universe which is its superior. No other preaching is conceivable, which, in the nature of things, is better fitted to make the condition of an impenitent soul appear to itself intolerable, and to break down the defenses of its will against the love of Christ. Conceive of the descent, headlong and far, which a soul must make in coming down from the empyrean of such ideas to muddle itself with the question of taking an "anxious-seat"!

(10) Again: experience in revivals will teach you that often there is a point in the development of the work of divine grace at which it is expedient that human persuasion should cease. It has done all that it can do. It has tried every thing but silence. Wisdom dictates that now the awakened sinner should be left alone, and for this reason, — that he is *alone with God*.

Always, I think, before conversion takes place, if it occurs in such form as to disclose itself to the consciousness of the sinner, always there is a period, long or brief, of conscious moral solitude. The soul feels itself to be alone in the universe with God. The isolation of the day of judgment is foreshadowed in its vision. A wanderer in infinite spaces, cut adrift from

the solace of companionship in sin, with no friendly hand to support it, or voice to cheer it, the soul sees only a holy and offended God, whose rights it has outraged, and from whose burning eye it finds no hiding. It is best that this should be so. By this experience a sinner's individuality is intensified to his own consciousness. To break in upon that awful seclusion, to bring a sinner back from "God's silence" into the circle of human sympathies by our devices of "anxious-seats," and inquiry-meetings, and persuasions to self-committal in the sight of multitudes, may be a perilous intrusion. Secret intercessory prayer is infinitely more safe. By our suasions to acts which fall short of God's requirements at that critical period of a sinner's experience, we may furnish him with the very escape which he unconsciously craves from that sense of moral loneliness in the presence of God.

(11) Silence is, therefore, often the best protection a sinner can receive from his spiritual guide against the peril of the social element in a revival. Study narrowly the inner working of a revival, and you will find that often, at a certain stage in its development, men fear nothing else so much as to be alone. They will rush in crowds to a religious meeting for the sake of the social sympathy with which it surrounds them. As men in an earthquake will huddle together for the sake of escape from dying alone, so awakened men in a revival will often crowd an inquiry-meeting. They will seek thus just what the sons of Belial in the community, who are disturbed in conscience by the revival, seek in a carousal. Any thing is welcome, if it drowns God's voice in the soul's silence. Therefore I say, at such a juncture it is safer to take the risk of silence. Do nothing more, leave the sinner to himself; drive him, if need be, into solitude with God.

I have been much impressed, in reading the autobiography of Rev. Dr. Finney, with the fact that some of the most remarkable conversions which he records occurred instantly when he took himself out of the way. The result was perfectly philosophical. When man's voice was dumb, nothing was left to the inquiring soul but God's silence, and to that it must succumb The principle here, which Dr. Finney seems to have come upon occasionally, I would lift into rank as one of the elemental principles for which large place should be given in every revival of great power and of long continuance. There may be peril in it, but not so great peril as that of continuing and exalting the protection which an awakened conscience often finds in sympathetic excitements.

(12) In the same line of thought I remark that the popular curiosity about numbers in a revival is a misfortune. It is too often morbid. Sometimes it is a device of temptation. Never count the numbers of those who rise for prayers. Do not dignify thus that indeterminate act. The good sense of an eminent evangelist was notably evinced on one occasion, when he was asked how many rose for prayer last night, and he replied, "I never count." Do not be solicitous to know how many attend an inquiry-meeting. By skillful manipulation of an audience you can secure the attendance of hundreds as easily as that of dozens at such a gathering. Yet as evidence of conversions, or the prospect of them, such attendance may have no significance. Use an inquiry-meeting as you would use a Bible-class. Make it the means of religious instruction, not a test of religious awakening, still less a means of augmenting religious excitement. Above all, never trumpet these things as tokens of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

(13) We degrade the work of the Holy Spirit if we exaggerate a sinner's consciousness in our assumption of the working of divine grace within him. If we use as evidences of that work experiences which he can attribute to no such origin, we may do him an irreparable injury. We may give him degrading notions of God's work. He may fancy that it consists in suasion to petty and indecisive duties. That which he believes of himself he is likely also to believe of others.

Hence arises the theory that a revival is nothing different from other sympathetic ebullitions; that you can always have a revival if you desire it, and can induce sufficient numbers to combine in the persistent use of the right measures to evoke it. Certain revivalists make a most damaging concession when they admit that a revival of religion depends on the magnetism of numbers. Once sink the popular theory of revivals to a level with that of other social ferments, and they will be, like other social ferments, shallow, pretentious, short-lived. The grand idea of "visitation from the living God," having mercy on whom he will have mercy, drops out of them. They have then no more religious value than a commercial panic. Few things in this world are so disastrous to the cause of Christ as a perverted and degraded revival of religion.

Learn a lesson from St. Paul. Mark the unconscious satire with which he treats even a duty commanded by God, when men would exalt it out of place. When appealed to by certain cliques of Christians who thought it of vital importance whose hands had rested on them in baptism, and were crying, "Apollos baptized me," and "Cephas baptized me," and "Paul baptized me," he responds, "I know not whether I baptized," as if he would say, "Baptism — what is that? Who cares

for it? I do not remember any thing about it. I am sent to preach the gospel." So nothing is worth remembering which men would lift into rank with repentance, but which is not repentance.

So far as my observation of revivals has extended, impenitent men, and especially impenitent youth, need much more frequently to be warned against these religious substitutions in acts of "self-committal" than to be exhorted to the performance of them. Their value is immensely overrated, and their perils overlooked, in modern evangelistic labor.

(14) Another principle bearing upon this subject is that the tendency of popular religious excitement to morbid growths is proportioned to the insignificance of the executive action to which it is directed. Neither nature nor grace in normal action fosters profound agitations of conscience about petty things. Make such things the center of intense convictions of conscience, and you inevitably create religious distortions. The prick of a needle in the spinal marrow may make a child a hunchback for life. So let an awakened conscience be penetrated deeply concerning action which is not significant of character, and its working becomes diseased. The penetration results in ulceration.

(15) Therefore it is always the aim of a wise preacher in a revival to guide the current, and, still more carefully, a torrent of quickened emotion, as soon as possible into the even tenor of life's ordinary duties. The speciality of a revival of religion in itself is not a desirable thing. The sooner it ceases to be exceptional, and flows into life's common channel of interests, the better. Religious excitement has no value any further than it can be thus utilized in the sanctifying of common life. All conversions, until they receive the test

of real life, are of the nature of death-bed repentance in this respect, that they have not been subjected to the divinely appointed discipline of religious character. Hence it is seldom, if ever, wise to suspend for any long time the common routine of life, because of the presence of the Holy Ghost in regenerating power. We can devise no better means of moral discipline. We dislocate the divine plan, if we displace that in the attempt to improve upon it.

On one occasion, in a powerful revival in Amherst College, the more zealous Christian students sent a petition to the faculty, that for one week the collegiate curriculum might be suspended, that the whole time and interest of students might be concentrated upon the concerns of eternity. The object of the petition was above question. The methods proposed were plausible. But the president, the Rev. Dr. Humphrey, had had large experience in revivals. He told the young men that their policy was unwise. He said, in substance, that their theory assumed that the Holy Spirit was pressed for time, and was in haste to go elsewhere. The routine of collegiate duties was the very test which God had then and there ordained of the sincerity of those religious conversions. If students were converted, those very duties were to prove it, and to discipline their piety. Religion was to make them more industrious students, better scholars, more faithful to college laws. The monitor's bills would test their piety. The scale of scholarship would disclose it. On the other hand, he told them that the surest way to divert their religious interest into unhealthy moods, which would soon end it, was to relax the discipline of academic duty, and leave them nothing but prayer and praise and religious conversation to think

of and to do. He told them, in a word, that they could not improve upon the divine method of procedure in the discipline of Christian character. The petition was kindly refused; and the result was a prolonged and healthful work of divine grace, quiet and deep in its progress, — quiet, because deep, and so powerful, that, at the close of the year, seven-eighths of the students in college were Christians.

The principle involved in President Humphrey's reasoning was the same with that now before us. As religious excitement degenerates if isolated from common life, so, if you restrict it to secondary and indecisive duties, its tendency is to the same morbid growths. The more petty a thing is, the more tumultuous is popular excitement about it when once the *furor* is ignited. Great ideas tend to deep emotions: these, again, tend to tranquil and balanced action. Petty ideas, insignificant objects of feeling, indecisive duties, tend to effervescent emotion, and this to noise and clatter and confusion. Proverbially the great workings of God are still workings, and this because they are deep workings. Grace follows the analogy of nature. Everywhere greatest power is stillest power.

(16) Therefore the phenomenon is often witnessed in revivals, that, the more complicated the human machinery is which is set in motion, the more uncontrollable is the drift to morbid paroxysms. Such machinery almost always precedes pathological disturbances of the physical system. Even when popular excitement does not rise to hysteria, you will often perceive that the things men are thinking of, and talking of, and exciting themselves about, relate to the machinery alone. The anxious-seat, the inquiry-meeting, the rising for prayer, the covenant, the public speaking, the street singing,

the thousand and one expedients to promote the interest of novelty, absorb the popular thought. You hear almost nothing of deepening convictions of sin, of new discoveries of God, of new disclosures of the work of Christ, and of new conceptions of the work of God's Spirit. Ask for these evidences of regeneration, and you are met by a painful silence, or a gaping ignorance of your meaning.

(17) The conclusion of this train of thought, then, is this, that the true policy in the conduct of modern revivals is the old apostolic policy. Exalt the one and only act which God requires of an impenitent sinner. Exhort men to repent. Exhort them to be reconciled to Christ. Show them that they are enemies to Christ. Show them that they are exposed to eternal woe, because they have exposed themselves to eternal sin. Hold up Christ as the only and sufficient Saviour. Emphasize the work of the Holy Ghost as the only spiritual power that equals their spiritual helplessness. Ply thus the immeasurable motives to repentance, without which no man ever did repent, or ever can. Never permit the awakened conscience to elude that one act. Keep secondary things in the background. Warn men against counterfeits of repentance. The Scriptures are full of such warnings. Human nature in every age needs them.

I have termed the method here advocated "the apostolic policy." So far as we know, it was the policy of the Day of Pentecost. There is nothing in it which should limit it to apostolic times; nor is there any thing discernible in the diathesis of modern society which should require the abandonment of it in modern revivals. Experience indicates, that, just so far as it is displaced, revivals become a mixture of good and evil,

with a constant tendency of the evil to override and overwhelm the good.

5th, A fifth principle respecting the conduct of appeals is that they should be specific in their basis and their aim. The point from which they spring should be well defined: the point at which they strike should be equally so. They should never course at random in the air. The following facts deserve attention.

(1) Our common stock of religious thought contains much which may stimulate, yet not discipline, religious emotion. The majority of men in Christian lands are trusting to a certain religiosity of temperament. They prize their good moods. Their dialect in speaking of religious subjects indicates that they have no strong points of religious experience. Indefinite religious appeal works directly into the service of this capital error. Start the flow of natural religiosity by exhortation founded on nothing specific, and aiming at nothing in detail, and you may make ungodly men think very well of themselves for possessing sensibility enough to enjoy a mood of good feeling, when it may be that they have experienced nothing but a response of their nervous system to your elocutionary magnetism. There may be as much religion in their sympathy of nerve with the electric currents of an *Aurora borealis*.

(2) Sensibility to indefinite religious appeal easily passes also into the imaginative type of religious character. Not being reined up to specific duties by clear-cut convictions and intelligent emotions, it revels in æsthetic imaginings. The beauty of religion, rather than its obligations, the poetry of the gospel, rather than salvation by it, the literature of the Bible, rather than its authority, the sign of the cross, the worship of the eucharist, rather than the life of spiritual conflict which

Christianity reveals, become the charm of religious service. "Thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that can play well on an instrument."

Nothing more surely diverts religious thinking into this channel of imaginative luxury than the habit of listening to indefinite religious hortations from the pulpit. Exhort men merely to "be good and do good," and end there, and the probability is almost a certainty that they will wander from the strong points in Christian faith to amuse themselves with melodramatic trifles. Feeling which might be consolidated into a principle is thus kept in a fluid state for the want of something concrete to consolidate itself upon. In sheer debility of grasp upon any thing in real life, it muses over a wreath of evergreen or a painted window.

(3) Very different are preaching and its effects as recorded in the Scriptures. Prophets and Apostles and our Lord start with definite forms of religious doctrine, and aim them at specific points of religious practice. When men wander into dreamland in their notions of religious life, they are brought back to realities by such rebukes as these: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices?" "Bring no more vain oblations;" "Your feasts my soul hateth;" "Wash you; make you clean."

Not the sinfulness of sin, not the beauty of holiness, are the scriptural topics of appeal so frequently as the guilt of covetousness, of pride, of lying, of unbelief, of evil-speaking, of licentious imagination, and the duties of almsgiving, of honest weights, of self-sacrifice, of prayer, of repentance, of faith. The strong points and sharp points of Christian truth are the very points which inspired preachers use most eagerly. On the other hand, the sensitive points of human practice, the

festering ulcers of human guilt, those which a deceived conscience covers most carefully from rebuke, are the very points which they attack most mercilessly. To the most saintly devotees of the age they say, "Ye generation of vipers!" To such, they apply the lancet and the scalpel.

The character of the emblems by which truth and its effects are symbolized in the Scriptures proclaims the same design. Truth is a sword; it is a two-edged sword; it pierces; it divides soul from spirit. Things which no human analysis ever separated, it analyzes, and holds up to the eye of conscience. They to whom Peter preached were pricked: they were pricked in the heart, — the organ which a needle can not enter without causing death. Saul of Tarsus was goaded by pricks. The hoof of an ox could not resist them. An ox-goad is the emblem of the truth which prostrated him "trembling and astonished."

LECTURE XXXIX.

THE CONCLUSION: APPEALS.

6TH, Continuing the discussion of appeals, we remark, in the sixth place, that appeals should not be unnaturally passionate, nor weakly pathetic. Nothing cools the feelings of an audience more effectually than to see a preacher beside himself while they are comparatively tranquil. It is said of the appeals of Patrick Henry that they were never vociferous. They commonly had the stillness of solitary thinking. Vast is the distance between violent appeal and earnest appeal.

(1) Earnestness in exhortation is apt to be in inverse proportion to violence of style and boisterousness of elocution. The palm of the hand is more expressive than the fist. The eye may be more authoritative than either. Some of the appeals of President Edwards declaimed by a theatrical speaker would appear ferocious: their vehemence would neutralize their force. But uttered by the meek pastor at Northampton, and the exiled missionary at Stockbridge, with his subdued tones, without a lifted hand to enforce them, with looks of only benevolent eagerness, they were overwhelmingly earnest.

(2) Hortation should be conducted with entire self-possession. This is the only principle by which this

form of conclusion can be honestly premeditated. If a preacher loses his self-control, it should be because he can not help it. He may literally *lose* it: he has no business to hide it, or to pawn it. It is affectation to cultivate tears, or tremulous tones, or inaudible whispers, or hiatus in the voice, or a style of thought and expression which depends on and invites these theatric expedients. Never shed a tear in the pulpit which can be suppressed. It is a misfortune to be unable to suppress tears. I once knew a preacher whose most remarkable quality was the readiness with which he wept. He once shed tears in exhorting Christians not to be tardy in their attendance at the weekly meeting of the church. He was wonderfully attractive on a first hearing; but he had ten brief settlements.

(3) Those who have the least character have the most abundant flow of tears. Tears are the natural expression of infancy and paralysis. A sleepless night may make a man weep over a tooth-ache. Chronic insomnia may evoke tears over one's morning toilet. Infirmity of the lachrymal glands is not numbered among the Christian graces. Cultivate strength of nerve rather than delicacy of nerve. Use tonics, study mathematics, take the fresh air, take to the saddle, — any thing rather than chronic tears. We must appeal with feeling indeed; but it should be the feeling of men, not that of schoolboys, or of paralytics.

(4) In the long run men are not moved by a whining pulpit. A rare freshet of emotion they will tolerate: a reputation for freshets they do not revere. With the majority of men, life is too serious a business to allow the expenditure of sensibility in morbid moods. Their sober second-thought does not approve such

moods in the pulpit more than out of it. Why should they approve them in a preacher more than in other public speakers? Once only in the forensic career of Daniel Webster, in his plea for Dartmouth College, is it reported of him that he wept in the court-room; and I believe it is the present opinion of the bar that law was then against him. But suppose it had been his habit to weep before juries and judges, would he have been Daniel Webster? If a preacher habitually loses self-control in his appeals, sensible hearers set him aside as a man to be taken care of, not to be followed as a leader in the thick of real life.

Possibly it may appear to some of you that I have spoken with needless severity of the loss of self-possession in the pulpit; but the facts of clerical experience justify this and even stronger criticism. I find in the "London Christian World" of Jan. 5, 1877, an advertisement which reads thus: "Henry Wiggan, London, Evangelist, better known as 'the Weeping Preacher.' Mr. and Mrs. Wiggan, Evangelists of London, will hold evangelistic and soul-saving services in 1877, as follows." Then follows a list of Mr. and Mrs. Wiggan's public "weepings" for the whole year. Imagine a man's having gained the *soubriquet* of "the Weeping Preacher," and having accepted it as an honorary title, and publicly inviting the metropolis of the British Empire to come and witness the paroxysms of his lachrymal disease! Can the dignity of religion be subjected to a more humiliating burlesque than this?

Perhaps the lachrymose sermons of Henry Wiggan may be the means of saving some souls. Scarcely any thing in human experience is so weak or so wicked, that the Spirit of God can not extort some good out of it; but conceive of the immense volume of disgust at

religion which such a couple as these wailing Wiggans must produce among sensible people. The great majority of mankind are men of sense. The "*common* sense" is the phrase by which we designate the working of the grand balance of the human mind. Those who will be nauseated by the Wiggans of the pulpit are not the few whose fastidious tastes and infidel prejudices make them natural grumblers and chronic cavilers. They are the great majority of those who come within hearing of the blubbering apostles, or within sight of their advertisement. The silent repulsion from evangelical religion caused by one such paralytic in the pulpit is a fearful offset to any possible good he may accomplish in the conversion of a few souls.

Lord Macaulay was the son of Zachary Macaulay; and Zachary Macaulay was distinguished as a Christian philanthropist, and was the son of an estimable Scotch clergyman. It has astonished the readers of the biography of the gifted peer, that not one line appears in it from beginning to end which gives evidence that he ever had a thought of his soul's salvation. To religion as a personal concern there is no evidence that he devoted an hour of his brilliant career. How is it possible that the child of such an ancestry should have lived such a life, and died without a word in acknowledgment that he had ever heard of Jesus Christ? Is it not more than probable, that, at some critical and sensitive period of his youth or early manhood, he was repelled from the faith of his fathers by some such mountebank as this "Weeping Wiggan"? A fact which renders this probable is that Zachary Macaulay was one of the leaders of the "Clapham sect," — a small and erratic clique of Christians, who, like all fragmentary sects, had peculiarities which alienated from them the good sense of

the great body of English churchmen and dissenters. Some religious weakness of the Clapham preachers probably gave to Macaulay's mind an anti-Christian lurch from which he never recovered. Destruction of gifted souls in silence is the natural fruit of Henry Wiggan's method of saving souls. The loss of Lord Macaulay alone to the Christian faith would have been a great price to pay for the exploits of the "Weeping Preacher."

(5) Several things need to be taken into account in judging of the degree of earnestness with which an appeal should be pressed. Of these, one is the intellectual culture of the hearers. The tendency of cultivated mind is to the regulation, often to the suppression, of feeling.

Another factor in the account is the strength of the material which constitutes the body of the sermon. Vigorous discussion lays the train for a powerful appeal. Robert Hall's most thrilling extemporaneous appeals closed his most elaborate sermons. Hearers must see that a preacher's hortation stands firm on the strength of the truth on which it is built. Not otherwise can he exhort as one having authority.

The earnestness of an appeal must take into account, also, the mood of an audience at the close of the discussion. Abrupt transition from discussion to hortation is perilous. To appeal with great animation to a jaded audience is hazardous. Shakespeare represents Marc Antony as burning with indignation over the dead body of Cæsar at the very outset of his harangue: but he does not disclose that indignation by an outburst of mordant invective. His first words are, "I come to bury Cæsar." Calmly and sadly he accepts the mood of his auditors in place of his own. But at the close of his address he has wrought them to fury.

7th, Appeals should be so constructed as to imply the expectation of success. This suggests one of the subtle pivots on which the success of an exhortation often turns. The general principle of character, that hopeful men are successful men, applies with special pertinence to the effort of one mind to win the obedient sensibilities of another. In this, more surely than in many other things, men who expect to succeed do succeed. There is a certain fling of a preacher's whole being into an appeal to excited hearers which is often irresistible. Therefore, men should never be exhorted from the pulpit in the mood of despondency. They should not be appealed to as if they were too far gone in depravity to be hopeful subjects of appeal. Jeremiads are suited only to retributive prophecy, not to Christian hortation. Preachers of melancholic or ultra-conservative temperament are in chronic peril of failure in this respect. It is noticeable in biblical appeals, that, almost without exception, they are expectant in their moods. Even denunciatory expostulation has a ring of courage and expectation in it which prepossesses the hearer's mental bias.

Note some of the implications involved in an expectant hortation.

(1) An expectant appeal implies a good opinion of the hearer. It implies the belief that he is a reasonable man, open to persuasion. The most depraved of men have been saved by the awakening within them of that single conviction that honest men think well of them.

(2) An expectant appeal implies, also, a preacher's confidence in his own cause. Why does he expect another mind to believe, another conscience to feel, another heart to obey? Because he is assured that truth deserves it all. Every hopeful exhortation is an

indirect utterance of his faith. That faith allures by sympathy the hearer's faith.

(3) Again: an expectant appeal implies personal fellow-feeling of the preacher with the hearer. In a suasive appeal more than in any other utterance of the pulpit, we come near to men with this power of fraternal feeling. We do not say it; but it may be all the more effectual for being implied, not said. "Brother-man" is the keynote of the whole. "I would that all who hear me this day were such as I am," says St. Paul to Agrippa. That is the spirit of an expectant appeal.

(4) Once more: an expectant appeal implies the preacher's assurance of the presence of the Holy Spirit. All hopeful preaching implies that. Hopeful preaching honors the spirit of God: God, in return, honors it.

Such are the implications involved in hortations which are expectant of success. Every one of them is a source and a development of power. They go far towards explaining on philosophical grounds the successes of certain preachers whose exhortations are marvelous in their results.

8th, Appeals, above all other utterances of the pulpit, demand a natural elocution. The close contact implied in direct hortation needs to avoid all possibly repellent adjuncts of speech. Nowhere else, therefore, is unnatural delivery so hurtful. We need but to name the chief defects of pulpit elocution to be made sensible of the truth of this. Inanimate appeals, sing-song in appeals, theatrical appeals, declamatory appeals, excessive passion in appeals, unmeaning or unfit or inordinate gesture in appeals, whining appeals, hysteric appeals, appeals through the nose, guttural appeals, the peculiarity of an untrained voice which resembles the quacking of a duck in appeals, screaming and bellow-

ing, with alternate whispering, in appeals, rolling of the eyeballs in appeals, the scowl, the grin, the froth of saliva in appeals — is there any other feature or process of oral speech in which these faults of delivery are so repulsive as in this, in which we aim to speak to the inmost being of a hearer, and to get possession of his heart? That which we tolerate elsewhere is unendurable here. That which is only unpleasant elsewhere is disgusting here. That which we smile at elsewhere nauseates us here.

Elocution has indefinable graces and blemishes which are like perfumes and unpleasant odors in the atmosphere. We may not observe them, if our attention is not called to them; but, in the close intimacy between hearer and speaker which an appeal assumes as its prerogative, they are forced upon our attention. The curve of a lip, or the movement of an eyelid, may, in such a connection, be the decisive thing which wins a soul, or disgusts a soul.

9th, The foregoing remarks suggest that appeals should be prepared and spoken under the sway of genuine feeling on the part of the preacher. Most of the defects in exhortations which we have noticed arise from one form or another of fictitious emotion. Genuine emotion is, to a large extent, a law unto itself.

(1) An artistic appeal is always frigid. It may be bold, pungent, mordant; or it may be beautiful, pathetic, melting. We may marvel that it is not impressive, yet it is not impressive. It is the voice of one who describes, not of one who feels.

(2) Preachers experience a temptation and a peril in this respect, growing out of long practice in homiletic exhortation, which renders it easy and fluent in execution. Frederic Robertson somewhere speaks of "the

fatal facility of religious discourse" produced by the professional habits of preachers. Words of earnest appeal may flow glibly, yet the preacher may feel only the glow of professional excitement. When such perfunctory appeals become the habit of the pulpit, the violence they inflict on the moral nature of the preacher is appalling. It is a truism — yet its profoundness obscures our vision of it — that religious hortation should find in the preacher's own soul its most docile hearer. He should take to himself the admonitions which he so feelingly addresses to others. In no other way can he be honest in their utterance. In no other way can preaching secure the advantage so obviously aimed at by the divine arrangement by which human nature is made to appeal to human nature.

(3) Why are the chosen oracles of the gospel men? So far as we know, superlative orders of being might have been superlative preachers of the gospel; yet the advantages of an angelic and sinless apostleship God has seen fit to forego for the sake of that which we must therefore believe to be the superior force of a human ministry. A human intellect, human sensibilities, a human voice are chosen before the trump of archangels. The principle of sympathy is clearly exalted above the principle of authority. Even an experience of sin is put to higher uses than might have attended a history of spotless purity. But the wisdom of this whole system of instrumentalities for saving men by the persuasions of men is nullified, if the preacher does not take the place to which his mission assigns him as a fellow-man and a fellow-sinner who needs, first of all, the appeals which he aims at other men. Says President Davies of Virginia in one of the soliloquies with which he sometimes closed his most thrilling sermons,

"Oh my soul, hear thou this word; for I must preach to the one who needs it most."

(4) An artistic appeal will commonly betray itself to a practiced hearer by something characteristic of imaginative fervor. A bookish vocabulary, traces of archaic diction, involution of sentences, elaborated metaphor, rhythmical construction, scholastic illustration, — one or more of such signs will appear, showing that the head has labored more than the heart in the framing of the appeal. Hearers may think it very fine in its way; but they will feel that it is not the way in which hearts talk to hearts. "I thought your sentences were very pretty," was the commendation by which one plain hearer thought to please a youthful preacher who had just finished a sermon on the Day of Judgment.

(5) Sometimes the artistic counterfeit will betray itself by rudeness of hortation. Appeals to the feelings, if genuine, will always be studious of proprieties. They are not regardless of age, of sex, of time, of circumstance. They will not descend to low illustration or rough description. When Latimer, for example, in an appeal to certain afflicted hearers, said, "In this visitation God shaketh us by the noses, and pulleth us by the ears," he was working up his peroration artistically. He was not speaking from a full heart, in sympathy with bereaved men and women. Art can not manufacture a genuine appeal. As easily might the science which analyzes an eyeball create an eyeball. No audience will habitually mistake the fictitious for the genuine hortation. Preachers, like other men, and in this as in other things, are always found out in the end, and pass for what they are.

(6) An appeal, therefore, which is genuine in the composing, should not be preached, if it is not genuine

in the delivery. A written appeal should be reviewed and revolved near the time of its delivery, so that the mind shall resuscitate the mood of its composing. If this fails, let the appeal be dropped. You have lost it, if you have lost heart in it. Do not expose the corpse of it. Preach whatever is alive to the mood of the hour.

(7) To accomplish this without sacrifice of premeditated appeals, the habit of spiritual preparation for the delivery of a sermon is indispensable. Those who have been most successful in achieving the great ends of preaching have been most faithful to this discipline of secret prayer. Baxter used to pray thus with his Bible open before him, and his finger on the text of his sermon. Often, with tears of impassioned desire, would he pour forth his supplications for the spiritual success of his day's work. On one occasion when the thought occurred to him, when thus prostrate before God, of his popularity as a preacher, and of the throngs which he knew would crowd the church where he was about to preach, he broke out with the exclamation, "Not this, not this, O Lord! but the souls of this poor people of Kidderminster!"

St. Paul illustrates in his own person the genuine mood of homiletic exhortation, when he says, "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead." That consciousness of being the representative of God to men, delivering the message which God dictates, uttering God's thought in God's words, expressing God's heart in intense desire to save men, is the true mood of Christian appeal. To obtain it, a preacher must often go aside into the thick darkness where God is, and where God shall speak to him as to a friend.

10th, Appeals should not be developed at great length. With men, as with God, we are not heard for our much speaking. Cicero says that nothing dries up sooner than tears. Sensibility, from its very nature, does not bear long-winded appeal. How shall the peril be avoided? I answer, By oblique progress. Intersperse appeal with didactic remark. Suspend appeal, and speak didactically; then renew the appeal, and again suspend it. Tack, as in oblique sailing. A discourse may thus preserve its predominant character of hortation without the weariness of unremitting hortation.

11th, Appeals should possess unbounded versatility. One writer on homiletics prescribes the rule that sermons ought not all to end with the words "life everlasting."

(1) Appeals should be varied in respect to the class of sensibilities to which appeal is made. Sensibilities inferior to the sense of right are its natural auxiliaries, and should often be summoned to its support. The sense of order, the sense of beauty, the sense of honor, the patriotic instinct, the social affections, the love of knowledge, self-respect are natural allies of conscience. They are, therefore, proper objects of appeal in preaching.

(2) Hortations should be varied, also, in respect to the truths on which they are founded. Preachers who have a large range of discussion often narrow that range unconsciously in their conclusions. They adopt favorite ideas, which, with little variation, are wrought into all their exhortations. The favorite of one is death; of another, the day of judgment; of a third, heaven; of a fourth, the proportion of responsibility to privilege; of a fifth, the degeneracy of modern times.

The same class of feelings ought not always to be excited by the same class of truths. Appeals to fear may often be more effective if founded on the peril of eternal sin than if founded on the peril of eternal suffering. The chief advantage of novelty in preaching is that it touches the sensibilities of hearers in a way in which they were never moved before.

(3) Appeals should be varied, also, in their rhetorical structure. Vary them in respect to their degree of directness. Vary them as to the use of the personal pronouns. A delicate but often very valuable difference in structure depends on whether a preacher says "we," or "you," in an exhortation.

Vary appeals, also, in the methods of designating the character of hearers. There is more than a rhetorical difference between "sinner" and "fellow-sinner," between "impenitent hearer," and "impenitent friend,' between "Christians" and "Christian friends." By circumlocution the rhetorical form may be diversified indefinitely. William Jay used to employ such forms as these: "You singers to God's praise," "you worshipers in God's house," "you hearers of God's truth." He was not always studious of connections in his forms of address. On one occasion he said, "Some of you are so inconsistent in your lives, that, if I should see the devil running off with you at this moment, I could not cry, 'Stop thief!' He would but carry off his own property." Yet this invective he introduced by the address, "My dear brethren."

(4) In seeking variety of rhetorical form, care should be taken to avoid some terms which the pulpit has employed improperly. Dr. Payson used to address Christians as "professors." Professors of what? The title is a technicality. "My professing friends" was

also a favorite with Dr. Payson. It is ambiguous. President Davies often addressed his hearers by the title "Sirs." In Virginia this was a title of social distinction; but it expresses no distinction with which the gospel is concerned.

(5) In seeking variety of address in the forms of appeal, we should be sparing in the use of affectionate titles. "Dear hearers," "dear friends," "dear brethren," "dear sisters," "beloved in the Lord," and the like, can not become habitual in appeals without impairing their force. This may occur in two ways. Often used, these forms degenerate into forms only. To many hearers they mean nothing. They are like the affectionate address and the servile subscription of the beginning and ending of letters. Any thing has become an encumbrance which has become only a form. Every thing else should be sacrificed rather than an impression of sincerity. In hortation we should say nothing which we do not mean. Moreover, affectionate titles, if habitual, and yet so employed as to escape the danger of formality, will often appear unmanly. To an audience of children they might not do so; but full-grown men are chary of such titles in the realities of life, and suspicious of them in the pulpit. To many, if not rarely used, they seem indicative of constitutional softness in the preacher. Excessive tenderness disgusts their taste. They shrink from saccharine lips. Why is it that Anglo-Saxon tastes do not encourage the kiss between full-grown men? The same principle governs the use of affectionate forms of appeal.

12th, Appeals should be uttered without forewarning. One writer on homiletics deliberately recommends the following as the proper preface to a hortatory conclusion: "Time warns me to pause, and to close all,

finally, with one solemn exhortation;" and this, also, as another becoming formula, "Christian brethren, a word of serious and close application to the conscience shall now close this discourse." Imagine Lord Brougham introducing a peroration thus to the House of Commons. Fancy Gen. Butler addressing a jury in a criminal court with such forewarning of his appeal at the close. Some preachers commit this error by a preface which makes the impression of laziness. Bishop Lowth introduces an appeal thus: "But to draw to an end, and to make use of what has been said to our future establishment, from the foregoing discourse, I shall now draw a consideration or two, and so conclude." Could any thing picture more truthfully the plodding of the bishop's pen on his study-table? A sportsman hunting a partridge has more of oratorical force in his very attitude than a volume of such cathedral discourse.

Sometimes the forewarning of an exhortation gives to it the look of irony. A speaker at an anniversary in Boston rose on one occasion to address an audience of two hundred, in a house capable of seating three thousand; and he began thus, "I am deputized to appeal to the feelings of this audience to increase the contribution which is now to be taken." One would have imagined that the contribution-box would have been sufficiently cooling to such an audience without a refrigerant speech like that. What had they to do with his being "deputized" to appeal to them? Compare this appeal with the rhetorical policy of the prophet Nathan in his designs upon the conscience of David. All forewarning of appeals puts hearers at once on the defensive. They gird themselves up, and feel secure from the attack. They are at leisure to look out of

their loopholes. An appeal should have the skill and the suddenness of an ambuscade.

This ends our discussion of the several parts of a sermon. Some remarks of a more general character will be added in the closing lecture. For the present, two suggestions deserve to be recorded.

One is that the critical study of the constitution of discourse deserves to rank by the side of the study of psychology as a means of mental discipline. The rhetorical and mental sciences are close kindred to each other. Neither can be exhaustively analyzed without incursions into the other. The same is true of the relation of rhetoric to logic. The science of speech, and the science of thought, and the science of thinking power, all salute each other in any thorough analysis and study of them. Such was the dignity of rhetorical research as represented by Aristotle, the only strictly original rhetorician the world has ever known.

The other suggestion is that the habit of studying plans of discourse should be extended into secular literature. The principles which should govern the literature of the bar and the senate are the same with those which should govern that of the pulpit. The study of them in their secular applications, by preachers in active service, tends to preserve them from professional routine, and to render the clerical taste pure and robust. Some of the ablest preachers in the history of the American pulpit have also been lawyers; and some of the ornaments of the American bar have been vigilant students of the literature of the pulpit.

LECTURE XL.

CONCLUDING LECTURE: MINISTERIAL CULTURE.

GENTLEMEN, I complete to-day the course of homiletic lectures, the delivery of which you have made a pleasure to me by the kindness of your attention. I am constrained, by certain convictions which are sometimes a burden to me, to add a few words of comment upon the general drift of the instructions to which you have listened, and the spirit in which they should be applied to your life's work.

My treatment of the theory of preaching has grown up, in a course of years, on that model of homiletic teaching which the Calvinistic mind has generally held to be essential to the training of a preacher. The ideal of a preacher which I have uniformly had in view is that of a Christian scholar using his scholarship with the aim of a Christian orator. I have spoken to a group of scholarly hearers, and have aimed to help you to a more enlarged growth of scholarly culture. I do this every year, with an increasing conviction, that, as it respects intellectual preparation for the pulpit, this high Calvinistic ideal of a preacher is the true one. I can not believe that any less severe ideal is equal to the range of apostolic thought on the subject.

At the same time, I have found, by the side of this conviction, another, which is also deepening with years.

I have tried, in various parts of these lectures, to give you a hint of it in the way of warning. It is that our Protestant denominations are not in all respects using this theory of high culture in the ministry in a Christian way. Somehow or other, it is not working altogether right in practice. I acknowledge some alarm at the prospect before us, if the present drift of things, in one respect, be not arrested. A scholarly ministry, taken as a whole, we must confess is working away from the unscholarly masses of the people. Perhaps it would be more strictly accurate to say that the unscholarly masses are working away from it. But practically this makes no difference. The ministry is in its conception aggressive, not receptive. The commission is, "Go," not "Wait."

In Great Britain the fact is attracting more attention every year, that the clergy and the people are drifting asunder, and, I repeat, it makes no difference which is anchored, if the other is moving. The religious press of England and Scotland confesses the sundering. Infidel critics triumph over it. "The Westminster Review" discusses the fact, as one which candid men will not dispute. "The London Times" and "The Saturday Review" explicitly affirm that the clergy are no longer leaders of the religious thought of England. Reformers and statesmen are looking about them for other agencies than those of the Church and the pulpit to elevate the degraded, and control the "dangerous" classes. Is it not an ominous event, that, in a country which Christianity has civilized for a thousand years, vast masses of society should be so vast and so brutal as to be classified in the national mind by that title "dangerous"? They are no longer thought of by statesmen as objects of hope, scarcely even of compas-

sion, but simply as a threat hanging over the safety of the rest. They are given up to the police.

In our own country, with the advantages of our voluntary system in the support of the gospel, the same widening of the distance between the Protestant ministry and the masses is palpable. Politicians accept the fact, and act upon it. The secular press, to a great extent, treats it flippantly. Meanwhile what are our churches and ministry doing about it? Much that is cheering, but somewhat that is not so.

In the Episcopal Church it is frequently claimed, by a minority, I am glad to believe, that it is the mission peculiar to that branch of the Church to reach the cultivated strata of society. Many times have graduates of this seminary who possessed more than the average of gentlemanly address, and familiarity with cultivated society, been told that they had too much culture to waste themselves in the charge of missionary churches. In some cases, the gilded bait has been caught at. Worldly wisdom charges upon churches of Puritan origin, that they have in them the elements of low life; that their historical antecedents are not respectable; that their founders were low-born and low-bred; that their social affinities are not those of culture and refinement; and that therefore a re-action from them is periodically inevitable. From such argument one might reasonably infer that the chief glory of a church is to gather to its bosom the *élite* of cultivated life, to minister to the masses by churchly authority rather than by sympathy, and to rescue from low-bred sects the "Martyrs of Disgust."

Yet in our own churches, and in the whole Presbyterian group, the present drift of things is, to a considerable extent, in the same direction. The under-

current may still be right in the main; but many of the surface-currents, and certain local currents, are not so. Our craving for artistic music, worldly views of what constitutes ministerial success, and, more than all else, the principle of elective affinity in the gathering of churches, by which identity of social rank is made to mark practically the outline of church-membership, and still more sharply that of Christian fellowship, — are all tending the same way. It is not difficult to see whither.

Yet the complaint is universal among us, that a less proportion of the uneducated masses of American birth is to be found in Calvinistic churches than was found there thirty years ago. Christian men are innocently wondering, and inquiring, "Why is this?" We are entering upon an era of experiments for remedying the evil. I have not a word to say against those experiments. They may all be excellent in their way. They are all welcome, as evidence that good men are feeling after the right way. But this fact is observable in them thus far, that, to a large extent, — not entirely, — they either leave the clergy out of the question, or assign to them a false position. We are creating vast organizations of lay-laborers, Sabbath-schools, mission-schools, mission-chapels, young men's Christian associations, colporters, Bible-readers, etc., to reach the masses of the people, because of the admitted fact that our pulpit, as administered to our own wants and tastes, does not reach them. We are working, in great part upon a system which takes it for granted that our own clergy, in our own churches, can not reach them. In some cases, the avowal is whispered that we do not want to reach them there.

We are looking more and more to divine interposition in raising up men of exceptional zeal and tact as

evangelists, at whose feet our scholarly and learned clergy sit for instruction, given not always in even grammatical English. That was a most humiliating circumstance to the cultivated clergy of one of our Atlantic cities, that the chairman of a meeting assembled to devise plans for the continuance of special services, and other efforts for a revival of religion, told the audience that the evangelist who had been laboring there would bring to them certain clergymen and other helpers from abroad, who would be *qualified* to carry on the work. As if the corps of pastors of all denominations with which that city was blessed — admitted to be unsurpassed in culture and in training for the pulpit — were incompetent for such a service, and exceptional men, clerical and laical, must be sought out, and brought from afar. This surely is an abnormal state of things. It ought to have set every thoughtful man to searching below the surface for the causes and the remedy.

Even in the Methodist churches, the boast of which, from the time of John Wesley, has been their apostolic adaptation to the lower classes of society, the same complaint begins to be heard. Recent Methodist authorities say that they are losing in some degree their ancient hold upon the lower orders of the people. They affirm that the spirit of their denomination is rising in the direction of refinement, of education, of social position, and pecuniary beneficence: but they are not lifting the masses with them: they are simply soaring overhead. The ideal of an educated ministry being of recent origin in the Methodist Church, many earnest friends of culture there think they see that the work of clerical education is not wholly a gain. They acknowledge, that, as their ministers become more

highly cultivated, their tendency is to work away from those portions of the people which are not so. Like seeks its like. The danger is that nature will outweigh grace. Their educated preachers and their humble classes are in peril of parting company, because they are in peril of losing sympathy.

In view of these facts, it is not strange if the whole question of clerical education undergoes revision. It must not be wondered at, if many Christian laymen infer that our process of cultivation is a destructive one. It is not unnatural that one of them should say, as he did, "Our ministers are educated to death;" or that another should write, "They are so trained as to make it difficult for the churches to support them with their expensive tastes;" or that a third should believe that "they are so cultivated as to indispose them to become pastors of rural churches;" or that a fourth should affirm that "they are so made over by ten years of scholastic seclusion as to wither their godly sympathy with the people everywhere." All this, and much more, is said by laymen in their conversations and correspondence on the subject. You perceive inklings of it now and then in the reports of public assemblies.

I do not indorse these criticisms; far from it. Indeed, so far as my observation goes, the men who make them do not express in them their own personal wants, but what they suppose to be the wants of others. I have yet to find the first layman, with intelligence enough to have a reasonable opinion on such a subject, who wants any other than the first order of intellect, and the most perfect culture, in the person of his own pastor. Still, such criticisms contain a truth; and they may become wholly true, unless the clergy prevent that

result, each in his own experience. The youthful clergy have a special responsibility respecting it. Dr. Emmons said that he never expected to convince a man of any thing which he did not already believe, after the age of forty years. There is less of hyperbole in this as applied to educated mind than as applied to the illiterate. Clerical mind, especially after spending fifteen years in the pulpit, exercising there the authority of a religious teacher, is apt, from that time onward, to float on currents of opinion formed and set during those years. The junior ministry, therefore, must commonly change the currents of clerical practice, if they need change.

I wish, therefore, to commit these homiletic discussions to you with the most solemn charge that you receive them with a spirit *of practical good sense and of practical piety*. These two things are the substance of the whole matter. I have tried to proportion the theory of preaching as symmetrically as I could. But in a thousand applications of it you must do the work of adjusting its proportions. You must qualify rules. You must balance principles. You must interpret precepts in the light of circumstances. You must judge when it is a use, and when it is an abuse, of any truth you may have heard here, to apply it to your own practice. Good sense and piety should shape your applications of it, as of all knowledge, and always should so shape them as to *make* your pulpit reach the masses of the people.

I tell you frankly, that no theory of preaching is worth a farthing which can not be worked practically to that result. No theory of ministerial culture is either scriptural, or philosophical, or sensible, which can not bridge the gulf between the clergy and the masses.

The pulpit never can accomplish its mission on any such theory — never.

The methods of lay labor which are so popular at present for the evangelizing of the masses, and which, in the main, are so hopeful a sign of our times, are defective, and will fail, just so far as they assume to confine to laymen the duty of personal contact with the lower orders, and to exalt the clergy into an upper layer of influence, in which they shall simply be preachers to select hearers, and teachers of teachers, reaching the people only by proxy. No preacher can afford that kind of seclusion. Such an adjustment of powers in the Church is hierarchical. The philosophy of it is priestly. It is a return to the genius of Judaism and of Paganism. Nothing could doom the clergy to a wasted life more fatally.

If I could be persuaded that the theory of ministerial culture which I have tried to represent to you could result legitimately in any such drifting asunder of the pulpit and the lower orders of society, I would abandon the whole of it. I would drop it as I would a viper. A preacher had better work in the dark, with nothing but mother-wit, a quickened conscience, and a Saxon Bible to teach him what to do and how to do it, than to vault into an aerial ministry in which only the upper classes shall know or care any thing about him. You had better go and *talk* the gospel in the Cornish dialect to those miners who told the witnesses summoned by the committee of the English Parliament, that they had "never heard of Mister Jesus Christ in these mines," than to do the work of the Bishop of London. Make your ministry reach the people; in the forms of purest culture if you can, but reach the people; with elaborate doctrine if possible,

but reach the people; with classic speech if it may be, but reach the people. The great problem of life to an educated ministry is to make their culture a power, instead of a luxury. Our temptations are all one way. Our mission is all the other way.

It is not, then, less education that our clergy need. It is inconceivable to me how any educated man can see relief from our present dangers, or from any dangers, in that direction. Ignorance is a remedy for nothing. Imperfection of culture is always a misfortune.

Some remarks made once at a meeting of the General Association of Massachusetts, suggested, if correctly reported, a reduction of the term of years in our seminaries for all students of theology, and hinted at the need of "recovery" from the influence of the training in theological seminaries. Every truly educated man knows better. We do not want inferior culture, if we can get any thing else. The world will not bear it from us when it can command any thing else. If this world is ever to be converted to Christ by other than highly educated agencies, it must be by the aid of miraculous agencies. Nothing short of inspiration and miracle ever has made ignorance and low culture successful in the propagation of Christianity on any large scale and for a long period of time; and nothing short of such powers ever can do it. But miracle and inspiration we can not look for. In place of them we must look for consecration of culture. This is the thing which the world is blindly craving. We need subjection of the personal tastes, which high culture creates, to apostolic and Christlike motive. We need contentment under the limitations of culture, which the necessities of labor in our profession demand. We need to

revise our theories, and moderate our desires, respecting pecuniary support. Are we right, are we apostolic, in the conviction that we must live in such a style that we can not obey a call of God and of his Church to the humblest fields of pastoral usefulness? Does not this conviction imply a mistake in our self-adjustments to the work of Christ?

Above all, we need faith in the Christian ideal of culture which measures its value by its use, its dignity by its lowliness, its height in character by its depth of reach after souls below it. This was Christ's own ideal of culture. He possessed no other; he respected no other; he denounced every other most fearfully. Not an act of his life, not a word from his lips, gives any evidence that he would have tolerated the awful anomaly of clerical life in which a man ministers placidly in a palatial church to none but elect and gilded hearers, with all the paraphernalia of elegance around him, and with culture expressed in the very fragrance of the atmosphere; while "Five Points," and "Boweries," and "Ann Streets," are growing up, uncared for by any labors of his, within hearing of his organ and his quartet.

Our guard against the peril here indicated, then, is spiritual, as distinct from intellectual, in its nature. The cry should be, not "Less intellect, less study, less culture," but simply, "More heart, more prayer, more godliness, more subjection of culture to the salvation of those who have little or none of it."

I beg you to ponder the subject in this spirit, and to begin your ministry with a bold rejection of every thing that implies your personal seclusion from the poor and the ignorant classes. Reject every theory of preaching which contemplates that seclusion as a necessity. Rec-

tify the proportions of any theory, which, though true in its parts, yet, as a whole, blocks your way to the hearts of the people. Prune down any theory, which, for reasons yet unknown to you, you can not work to advantage, so as to make your way to the people's hearts. Stretch your theory to the facts of your life's work, be they what they may. Hold no theory for a day which is not elastic enough to compass the necessities of your position. I have failed in my endeavors to help you, if you have derived from my words any such theory.

Esteem no institution sacred which sets you above and aloof from the commonalty. Revere no clerical usages, no laws of etiquette, no guards of your reputation, no proprietary claims, which require you to hold back from personal labor with the humblest or the most guilty. Yield to no churchly sentiments, or whispered arrangements, or tacit understandings, or unuttered disgusts, through which churches shall be gathered by the law of social affinity, instead of the law of benevolence; so that their pastors can not get at the poor and the degraded, because there are none such within hearing.

Refuse to be pastors of such churches, if they insist upon their exclusiveness. Accept, rather, the calls of the "low-born and low-bred." Accept the "plain living and high thinking," if they are necessary to give you access to the low grounds of society, unless you can clearly justify to your own conscience your right and duty to do otherwise. Let it be said of you, "This man eateth with publicans and sinners," unless you can give a reason to ministering angels and to God for choosing rather to eat with princes and magnates of the earth. Refuse to be tempted by churches in which

pageantry of architecture, pomp of worship, operatic music, patrician caste, sumptuous dress, and other forms of unchristian luxury will conspire against you, making it impossible for the poor to be there if they would, and making them unwilling to be there if they could. The man was never born who could long carry the load of such a church as that with a Christ-like love of souls in his heart.

The spirit which should lead you anywhere into Christian work should be that which we commonly laud as the missionary spirit. That type of character and that habit of mind which time has clothed with romance in the persons of Henry Martyn, and William Carey, and Alexander Duff, are the same which should carry any man anywhere as a preacher of Christ. In no other spirit is a man called to preach at all.

Begin, I pray you, begin your work, with faith in the practicability of this. Believe that you can go to your metropolitan pulpit in Boston, or New York, with the same Christ-like mind with which you would expect to go to Beyroot, or to the Zulus. There is no difference between the two. The call of God which summons you to the pulpit means the same thing everywhere. If you do not feel this, if the missionary question does not leave you here at home with entire repose of conscience, if you are entering on your life's work here on a lower level of Christian life than you would think necessary if you sought commission from foreign missionary boards, be sure that you are beginning wrong. You are not yet at peace with God in this thing. It is not God's call that you hear.

Look at the elder President Edwards. What do we know of him? We know him as a philosopher. We know him as pastor of one of the then most powerful

churches of New England. We know him as president of one of the most venerable colleges of America. We know him as the humble missionary to the Indians at Stockbridge. Yet is he not in all these positions of ministerial labor the same kind of man in character? Did not the same consecration lead him to every one of them? Did not the same type of Christian life move him to write the "Essay on the Will," which dictated his sermon at Enfield, and his missionary talks at Stockbridge? As the peer and the rival of David Hume and John Locke, does he not seem to us precisely the same Christ-like man that he was as the biblical teacher of Pequot children?

That is the true ideal of a Christian minister. He should be able to go, without a ripple of difference in his sense of personal distinction, to the Feejee Islands, or to the Fifth Avenue in New York. Pass on to your work, brethren, in that spirit of profound consecration and repose of conscience. Get down to those deep soundings of the sea of the life that is with God. Then God will make your life a song to you.

APPENDIX.

HOMILETIC AND PASTORAL STUDIES.

A COURSE of lectures on homiletics, in a professional seminary, must necessarily be fragmentary. It has been my habit to preserve a record of topics belonging to this department and to the twin department of pastoral theology, the large majority of which are not discussed in the foregoing pages. These topics have been suggested by the criticism of manuscript sermons, by the inquiries of students, by letters from clergymen and intelligent laymen, and by my professional and general reading. They are now the relic of earlier years, in which I hoped to discuss these subjects, either orally or through the press. On many of them I have prepared lectures which I have found no time to deliver. On others I have lectured extemporaneously. But the chief value of them is found in the hints which they give of the range of study which is open to a studious pastor in the direct line of his professional work, — a range which the studies of a lifetime can not exhaust. They seem to me important enough to be recorded as an appendix to the present volume. Those which belong to pastoral theology will not be found incongruous with the rest. I give them substantially as I find them among my papers, with only such general grouping as is necessary to save them from apparent disorder. I hope that they will, at least, suggest some worthy conception of the dignity of the pastoral office as the object of a life's labor.

I. The first group of these topics concerns the homiletic treatment of the *Being of God*. 1. Is the Being of God a proper subject of argument or discussion in the pulpit? 2. Ought purely scientific atheism to be treated in popular preaching? 3. The uses and abuses of the argument from the human conscience for the divine existence. 4. How should that type of infidelity be treated which recognizes moral government without a moral governor?

5. Should the doctrine of evolution be discussed in the pulpit? If so, in what way?

II. A second group of topics concerns the *Attributes of God.* 1. How can the attributes of God be best classified and represented in the pulpit, for popular impression? 2. The value of the divine attributes as themes of sermons in times of religious revival. 3. The limitations upon the use of the human mind as an image of the divine mind. 4. Should the divine sense of right be represented as an authority to the divine mind? 5. Can the popular mind conceive of divine suffering without loss to its thought of divine perfection? 6. Defects of the ordinary methods of preaching on the attributes of God. 7. A plan of a series of sermons upon the attributes of God.

III. A third collection of inquiries clusters around the doctrine of *The Trinity.* 1. Should the Trinity be preached as a whole, or by preaching the Deity of God in each one of his three modes of existence? 2. Ought the Trinity to be represented by the use of the word "persons"? 3. Ought the Trinity to be taught as a doctrine of the Old Testament? 4. Ought the modern pulpit to concern itself with the doctrine of the "eternal generation" of Christ? 5. Can the theory of a double consciousness in Christ be usefully taught in the pulpit? 6. Should the personality of the Holy Ghost be taught as an essential doctrine of Christianity? 7. How shall the pulpit use those texts which seem to speak of the Holy Spirit and Christ interchangeably? 8. Can the pulpit profitably use any intimations of Trinity derived from other sources than the Scriptures? 9. How shall the popular sense of contradiction in the doctrine be treated? 10. What analogies are most useful in illustrating the Trinity? 11. How can the deity and the humanity of Christ be represented, so that neither shall impair the popular sense of the other? 12. How shall that theory of Christ's person be treated which represents him as superhuman, yet not an object of worship? 13. A plan of a single sermon — also of three sermons — on the doctrine of the Trinity.

IV. A fourth list of topics centers in the subject of the *Inspiration of the Scriptures.* 1. Is Dr. Arnold right in conceding that the doctrine does not admit of definition to the popular mind? 2. Does the popular conception of inspiration need revision? 3. What is the most useful line of argument in the popular treatment of inspiration? 4. What use, if any, should be made of other

forms of mental illumination to illustrate biblical inspiration? 5. What is the bearing of inspiration on the literary character of the Bible? 6. Are discussions of the canon of the Scriptures desirable in the pulpit? 7. What difference, if any, should be taught between the Old and the New Testaments, respecting their inspiration? 8. How should popular faith in dreams and visions, as forms of divine revelation, be treated? 9. How should the pulpit treat the drift of modern Christian thought which tends to dispense with inspired authority in religion? 10. Should the Swedenborgian theory of inspiration be discussed in a sermon? 11. A series of plans of lectures to the people on inspiration.

V. The fifth class of topics relates to the *Creation and the Fall.* 1. Ought the pulpit to treat the narrative in Genesis as history? 2. How shall its adjustment to the facts of modern science be made clear to the popular mind? 3. How should objections to the biblical account of the Temptation be treated in preaching? 4. Is it expedient to attempt a popular discussion of the literary history of the biblical record of the Creation? 5. How should the unity of the human race be treated in preaching? 6. A plan of a series of sermons on the Creation and the Fall of Man.

VI. A sixth group of topics is gathered around the doctrine of the *Natural Character of Man.* 1. How can the natural antipathy of hearers to this doctrine be overcome? 2. A review of John Foster's essay on "The Aversion of Men of Taste to Evangelical Religion." 3. Ought the moral nature of man to be represented by the phrase "total depravity"? 4. Ought the consequences of the Fall to the character of the race to be represented by the phrase "original sin"? 5. How shall the popular sense of injustice under the doctrine of inherited depravity be removed? 6. By what rhetorical auxiliaries to the doctrine of depravity can the popular conscience be quickened to a biblical sense of sin? 7. Ought sin to be represented as the penalty of sin? 8. How shall we make the distinction palpable between depravity and sin? 9. How should the pulpit treat the unpardonable sin? 10. Ought the pulpit to discuss the character of infants? and, if so, what should be its teaching? 11. How are the biblical representations of the divine authorship of sin to be explained to the popular comprehension? 12. Is the Freedom of the Will a proper subject for discussion in the pulpit? 13. How shall the popular sense of the rectitude of natural affections be met in preaching the fact of

entire sinfulness? 14. Does the modern Church need admonition against ascetic self-examination? 15. A series of plans of sermons on the Depravity of Man.

VII. A seventh cluster of inquiries finds its center in the doctrine of the *Atonement*. 1. Ought the theory of a limited Atonement to be specifically treated in the pulpit? 2. To what extent should the philosophy of the Atonement be discussed in preaching? 3. Ought any theory of the Atonement to be presented as covering all the reasons for its necessity? 4. How shall we guard the faith in an unlimited Atonement against the abuse of it towards the doctrine of universal salvation, in the theology of the people? 5. How shall we guard the doctrine against Antinomian abuses in practice? 6. How shall we protect the doctrine from that abuse of it which ascribes vindictiveness to God? 7. What should the pulpit teach respecting the suffering of the Deity in the Atonement? 8. What should the pulpit teach of the cravings of the human conscience as giving intimations of the nature of the Atonement? 9. Of the several theories of the Atonement, is it wise to present any other than the one which is to be defended? 10. Does the doctrine of Justification by Faith require now the prominence given to it by the Reformers of the sixteenth century? 11. Should the ancient distinction of the offices of Christ, as those of prophet, priest, and king, be made obvious in the methods of the modern pulpit? 12. A plan of a series of sermons on the Atonement.

VIII. An eighth group of topics relate to the doctrine of *Regeneration*. 1. How should the subject of impenitent prayer for regeneration be treated? 2. How should religious inquirers be addressed, who profess to be waiting for regenerating grace? 3. How can the necessity of regeneration be reconciled, to the popular satisfaction, with the duty of immediate repentance? 4. Is it expedient to preach either of the two doctrines, regeneration and repentance, without allusion to the other? 5. To what extent may the philosophy of the human mind be used in interpreting the biblical symbols of regeneration? 6. Ought man's ability to repent to be taught expressly, or only by implication in his responsibility? 7. Should preachers exhort men to use the means of regeneration? 8. How shall the difference between regeneration and miracle be made clear to the popular mind? 9. In preaching the two doctrines of ability and dependence, under what conditions should either take

precedence of the other? 10. Should Dr. Bushnell's theory of Christian nurture be preached? 11. A series of plans of sermons on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

IX. A ninth collection of topics surrounds the subject of *Retribution*. 1. Should any experience of this life be represented as retributive? 2. How shall a morbid conscience in afflicted men be treated? 3. May the pulpit properly be silent as to the duration of future punishment? 4. May the question of a future probation be safely left unanswered? 5. How shall the belief of the Church in endless retribution be made a practical faith? 6. How shall the pulpit meet the popular objection to the doctrine that faith in it can not consist with a happy life? 7. The uses and the limitations of the illustration of divine by human government. 8. Ought preachers to represent retributive woe as the result of natural law only? 9. How shall the conflict between the traditions of the pulpit and the testimony of physicians, respecting the remorse of the impenitent on death-beds, be treated? 10. How is the tendency of refined culture to ignore this doctrine to be overcome? 11. What is the relative value of the argument from reason as compared with that of the argument from the Scriptures for this doctrine? 12. How ought the conflict of authorities in the interpretation of the Scriptures upon this doctrine to be treated by preachers? 13. The use and the abuse of the biblical narrative about Lazarus and Dives. 14. What use should be made of the biblical symbols of future punishment, by the pulpit? 15. What proportion should be given, in popular discussion of the doctrine, to eternal suffering as compared with eternal sin? 16. What accompaniments of style and elocution should attend the preaching of retribution? 17. How should a pastor treat suspense of faith in the doctrine, on the part of believers who have lost impenitent friends? 18. What are the most important auxiliaries to the doctrine in the popular faith? 19. Does the popular theology at present need to be guarded against excessive conceptions of divine justice, as related to those of divine love? 20. How can the intrinsic loveliness of divine justice be made vivid to the popular thought? 21. Should the doctrine of endless punishment be *often* preached expressly? 22. A series of plans of sermons, covering the whole doctrine of Retribution.

X. A tenth group of topics concerns the subject of *The Resurrection of the Body*. 1. Is it sufficient for practical uses to teach

the immortality of the soul? 2. How should the pulpit treat the apparent teaching of two resurrections in the Scriptures? 3. Does natural science require any modification of the obvious meaning of 1 Corinthians, fifteenth chapter? 4. What notice should the pulpit take of scientific objections to the doctrine? 5. How shall the natural recoil of the human mind from disembodied existence be treated? 6. What analogies of nature are most effective in illustrating and impressing the fact of resurrection? 7. Should the body of our Lord at the time of his transfiguration be represented as an illustration of the spiritual body of believers? 8. What shall the pulpit teach of the "second advent," and its sequences? 9. The historic fact of our Lord's resurrection — should the people now hold it in the same relation to faith in his teachings in which it was held by the Apostles? 10. The adornment of popular cemeteries as an auxiliary to religious culture. 11. A brief series of plans of sermons on the Resurrection.

XI. An eleventh class of subjects relates to the *Biblical Doctrine of Heaven.* 1. How can the pulpit create the home-feeling in the popular anticipation of heaven? 2. How shall we make heaven a reality to hearers as a place? as a state of activity and spiritual development? as a state of organized society? 3. How shall we treat the traditional sabbatical idea of heaven? 4. How can we make heaven attractive to children? 5. How shall we treat the subject of the Recognition of Friends in Heaven? 6. Is the pulpit justified in teaching the continuance in heaven of *any* of the social relations which exist on earth? 7. How shall the traditions of literary fiction respecting the eternity of conjugal affection be treated? 8. To what extent may the pulpit indulge in conjectural discussion of the heavenly life? 9. How shall we most effectually make the person of Christ central in the popular thought of heaven? 10. What is the legitimate use of the biblical symbols of heaven and its conditions? 11 How shall the pulpit treat the subject of the intermediate state? 12. What use, if any, can the pulpit make of the visions and preternatural hearing of the dying? 13. Has the singular pre-eminence given to music in the biblical representations of heaven any occult significance? 14. Should that form of Christian experience which consists of habitual meditation upon heaven and its employments be urged upon Christians? 15. A series of plans of sermons on Heaven.

XII. A twelfth cluster of themes gathers around the *Angelology*

of the Scriptures. 1. What are the proper uses of the biblical angelology in the modern pulpit? 2. Has the Protestant recoil from Romanism on this subject been excessive? and does it need correction? 3. What shall we teach on the subject of guardian angels? 4. Should we teach the agency of departed human spirits in earthly ministrations? 5. What treatment shall the pulpit give to modern Spiritualism? 6. Ought preachers to discuss the extent of sin in other portions of the universe? 7. Should we represent Satan as a person? and is it wise to suggest to the popular mind the opposite theory, by discussing it? 8. Does modern Christian thought equal the Scriptures in its recognition of the agency of evil spirits? 9. Has the biblical witchcraft any modern counterpart? 10. Do the Scriptures teach the cessation of demoniacal possession? 11. How should we treat the representation of Satan in the Book of Job? 12. The extra-biblical angelology of Milton. 13. A series of plans of sermons on Good and Evil Angels as represented in the Bible.

XIII. A brief list of inquiries centers in the subject of *Miracles.* 1. What is the exact use of miracles in the teachings of the modern pulpit? 2. What principles should govern a preacher in cases of doubt as to the miraculous character of a biblical event? 3. How shall the pulpit meet the objections of science to miracles, so as to command the popular faith? 4. Is the story of Jonah to be treated as allegory? 5. Is the necessity of miracles in proof of Christianity limited to times, or classes of mind? 6. What are the chief abuses of miracles in the usage of the pulpit? 7. How shall preachers treat the alleged modern Romish miracles? 8. How shall the popular confusion of spiritualistic phenomena with miracles be treated?

XIV. A fourteenth group of topics relates to the subject of *Prayer.* 1. What is prayer considered as literary composition, — prose, or poetry? 2. How shall a preacher combine facility with spirituality in public prayer? 3. The substance, the form, the order, and the delivery of public prayer. 4. Ought public prayer to be premeditated? 5. The abuse of prayer to the purposes of preaching. 6. What instruction should the pulpit give on the subject of biblical sortilege as practiced by the Moravians? 7. How can preaching most effectually train a church to the development of power in prayer? 8. How should honest skepticism as to the reality of prayer be treated? 9. To what extent, and how, should

scientific objections to prayer be discussed in the pulpit? 16. What public use may a preacher properly make of his personal experience in prayer? 11. Should the pulpit encourage audible responses to public prayer? 12. Does the usefulness of public worship require the revival of liturgies in non-prelatical churches? 13. Is it expedient to open churches for daily prayer? 14. To what extent should private requests for public prayer be encouraged? 15. How should the alleged cure of disease by prayer alone be treated? 16. To what extent should the details of the sermon be recognized in the structure of the prayer preceding or following it? 17. How shall the pulpit reconcile unanswered prayer with the specific promises of the Scriptures? 18. A series of plans of sermons on the reality of prayer, conditions of success in prayer, unanswered prayer, the relation of prayer to Christian activity. Another series on public, social, family, and secret prayer. A third series on the chief examples of prayer recorded in the Scriptures.

XV. Another collection of topics gathers around the subject of *Missions*. 1. Should missions to the heathen be advocated on the ground, that, as the rule, heathenism results in the loss of the soul? 2. To what extent is the history of missions a valuable subject of discourse in the pulpit? 3. Ought uninspired missionaries to be made the subject of biographical sermons? 4. How may foreign missions be best protected from the spirit of romance in the Church? 5. What are the right proportions of interest in foreign as related to home missions, and how can they be preserved? 6. How should monthly concerts be conducted? 7. Should the pulpit teach the Jewish principle of tithes in the contribution of property to religious uses? 8. How can the pulpit most successfully develop the missionary spirit in the Church?

XVI. Another group of topics relates to *Social and Political Reforms*. 1. What is the province of the pulpit respecting political parties in the Republic? 2. What relation has the pulpit to those reforms which are an outgrowth from Christianity? 3. The policy of dependence upon the indirect influence of the pulpit for the support of Christian reforms. 4. How shall the pulpit best perform its duty in relieving the mutual hostility of classes in modern society? 5. How should we preach on the Seventh Commandment? 6. Should abstinence from alcoholic drinks be taught as a duty *per se*, or on grounds of expediency only? 7. What use

should the pulpit make of the personal example of Christ respecting the use of wine? 8. Are reforms properly made tests of church-membership? 9. How shall the pulpit treat the frequent affiliation of reform with infidelity?

XVII. A seventeenth class of inquiries concerns the subject of *Revivals*. 1. What is the true theory of a revival? 2. Are revivals the normal method of the growth of the Church? 3. Are the laws of the working of the Holy Spirit in revivals discoverable? 4. Is a revival always practicable to the prayers and efforts of a church? 5. What agency of the pulpit is preparative to a revival? 6. Under what conditions should public religious services be multiplied in revivals? 7. Are the labors of evangelists desirable under a settled ministry? 8. What executive machinery may be wisely employed in revivals? 9. What type of theology is most effective in revivals? 10. What place should be assigned to doctrinal preaching in religious awakenings? 11. How may the service of song be made most effective as an auxiliary in such awakenings? 12. What are the pathological perils incident to sympathetic religious excitement? How avoided? How treated when not avoidable? 13. How should the disinclination of refined culture to sympathetic religious awakenings be treated? 14. What should be the treatment of children under the excitement of a revival? what of their admission to the church? 15. Does the subsidence of a revival indicate religious decline? 16. What should be the policy of the pulpit in the period immediately following a season of revival? 17. What preaching is best fitted to the training of recent converts and the testing of conversions? 18. Is President Edwards's work on the "Religious Affections" suited to the present generation? 19. Is President Edwards's sermon entitled "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" a suitable model of comminatory preaching in a modern revival? 20. What manuals of Christian experience are most valuable for the reading of young converts? 21. The comparative power, purity, and worth of modern and ancient religious awakenings. 22. A series of plans of sermons on Revivals.

XVIII. The next group of inquiries finds its center in the idea of *Proportion in Preaching*. 1. In argumentative preaching, what proportions should be given to the Bible, to reason, to intuition, and to tradition, as sources of proof? 2. In the choice of subjects, what proportions should be given to explanatory, illustrative,

argumentative, and hortatory preaching? 3. How should the proportions be adjusted between topical, textual, and expository discourses? 4. What should be the proportion of comminatory to encouraging sermons? 5. What proportion should be aimed at in the use of the Old Testament and the New? 6. What should be the proportion of negative to positive methods of discussion? 7. In what proportion should preaching be controversy with infidelity? 8. What proportion of preaching should be on the person, life, teachings, works, and death of Christ? 9. What should be the proportion of preaching to believers, and preaching to the impenitent? 10. How shall preaching develop most healthfully the active and the passive graces in Christian character? 11. How shall the doctrinal perspective in the faith of the people be kept from distortions and extremes? 12. What should be the proportion of written to extemporaneous sermons? 13. What should be the proportion of serial preaching to that of isolated sermons? 14. How can the pulpit adjust in due proportion the conservative and the progressive tendencies in Christian thought and action?

XIX. Another group of topics clusters around the subject of *Church Polity*. 1. To what extent is it wise to interest a church in questions of church government? 2. Should the pulpit defend any form of church government as by divine authority, to the exclusion of others? 3. The chief advantages and the chief abuses of the three great historic forms of church polity. 4. Use of the Congregational polity to the development of Christian character. 5. Ought women to be recognized as part of the ruling power in the church? 6. Has a pastor authority, in any sense, over his church, and, if so, how is it to be exercised? 7. Ought discipline to be executed against delinquency in Christian belief? 8. Does the Congregational polity at present need development in the direction of authority, or in that of liberty? in that of fellowship, or in that of individualism? 9. A series of plans of sermons upon the offices which are germane to a Congregational church.

XX. The twentieth collection of inquiries relates to the *Sunday School*. 1. What is its relation to the church? 2. By what methods supplementary to the school can the pastor best control the biblical instruction of the young? 3. Should catechetical instruction be given, and how? By the Westminster Catechism?

4. Under what conditions, if at all, may the school be wisely made a substitute for one of the preaching-services of the Lord's Day? 5. How should a pastor conduct teachers' meetings? 6. Is it expedient to select one of the subjects of sermons on the Lord's Day from the lesson of the school? 7. What should be the frequency and character of sermons to children? 8. Should a pastor encourage the employment of unconverted teachers? 9. Is the hymnology now current in our Sunday schools the best for the religious culture of the young? Is there any reason why the hymns of the church and the hymns of the school should be different? 10. A series of plans of sermons on subjects most appropriate to thoughtful children.

XXI. A brief collection of queries concerns the *Christian Work of Laymen*, so far as related to the pulpit. 1. Under what conditions should lay-preachers be encouraged? 2. What services should be the exclusive prerogative of clergymen? 3. Ought women to be admitted to the pulpit as lay-preachers? 4. What attitude should the pulpit take toward young men's Christian associations, and similar organizations, not ecclesiastical, for Christian labor? 5. A series of plans of sermons to Christians on methods of Christian work.

XXII. A group of topics concerns the *Lord's Supper*. 1. Is it wise to preface its administration with a sermon? 2. Is it expedient to administer it in silence? 3. Under what circumstances may it be administered privately? 4. Should its administration to the dying be encouraged? 5. Should the use of fermented wines be discouraged in its administration? 6. What are the best subjects for sacramental sermons? 7. A series of plans of sermons on the Closing Scenes in the Life of Christ.

XXIII. Another list of topics concerns the ordinance of *Baptism*. 1. Is the mode of baptism important enough to be made the theme of a sermon? 2. Should the baptism of infants be taught as a duty, or as a privilege only? 3. Should the pulpit give importance to the baptism of the dying who are unbaptized? 4. How may the moral significance of infant baptism be most effectively represented in the pulpit? 5. How shall faith in baptismal regeneration be treated among immigrants from State churches? 6. A series of three sermons on the moral significance, the proper subjects, and the modes, of Christian baptism.

XXIV. A considerable class of topics must be ranked as *Mis-*

cellanies. 1. Under what conditions is it desirable to preach funeral sermons? 2. Is preaching upon the Catechism a desirable method of doctrinal instruction? 3. Ought a preacher to preach beyond his own experience of truth? 4. Ought sermons on national Fast Days to be churchly, or secular? 5. Ought Christmas to be observed by preaching-services? 6. The uses and abuses of the argument from analogy in preaching. 7. To what extent should the immediate wants of a people govern the choice of subjects for the pulpit? 8. To what extent, and by what methods, may a preacher wisely labor for the intellectual culture of his people outside of the work of the pulpit? 9. What is, and what is not, plagiarism in preaching? 10. To what extent are biblical quotations desirable in sermons? 11. May theatrical literature be properly quoted in sermons? 12. The uses and abuses of preaching on the prophecies. 13. The uses and abuses of the parables in preaching. 14. The three modes of delivery in preaching, — by reading, from memory, extempore. 15. How should the biblical imprecations be treated in popular discourse? 16. How should the apparent barbarism of the divine government of the Israelites be treated in the pulpit? 17. How should preachers treat the subject of repentance on a death-bed? 18. How should the funerals of those who seem to have died impenitent be conducted? 19. The compilation of a collection of biblical burial-services. 20. How should the day of national thanksgiving be observed? 21. The construction of forms of marriage-service.

XXV. I find among my papers notes of the following subjects, as specially adapted to *Serial Preaching.* 1. The theology of Christ. 2. The chief events in Christ's life. 3. The Christology of the Old Testament. 4. Biblical emblems of Christ. 5. The Messianic Psalms. 6. The Lord's Prayer. 7. The Beatitudes. 8. The Sermon on the Mount. 9. Our Lord's farewell prayer in the seventeenth chapter of St. John. 10. A selection of the friends of Christ named in his biographies. 11. The parables. 12. The miracles of the New Testament. 13. The miracles of the Old Testament. 14. The fulfilled prophecies. 15. The destruction of ancient cities. 16. The representative characters of the Old Testament; the same of the New Testament. 17. The canon of the Scriptures. 18. The biblical descriptions of heaven and hell. 19. The messages of St. John to the seven churches of Asia. 20. The process of conversion, — man as the gospel finds him, as awakened,

as convicted of sin, in the act of repentance, evidences of conversion. 21. The Ten Commandments. 22. The characteristics of the four Gospels. 23. Religious awakenings recorded in the Bible. 24. The relationships of the family. 25. The duties of Christian citizenship. 26. The accumulation, the uses, and the abuses of property. 27. The biblical view of the position of woman in the divine organization of society. 28. The discoveries of modern astronomy, of geology, of chemistry, of biology as illustrative of religious truth. 29. The biblical bearings of recent explorations in the East. 30. The Pilgrim's Progress. 31. Other religious manuals, like Doddridge's "Rise and Progress," "Baxter's Saints' Rest," "The Imitation of Christ." 32. Lectures on some of the hymns of the Church. 33. Biographical lectures on some of the martyrs, on some of the reformers. 34. The history of the English Bible. 35. The exodus of the Pilgrims from Great Britain. 36. The several acts of public worship. 37. The biblical doctrine of the millennium. 38. To young men, on the morals of the several professions. 39. The Christian theory of the relations of capital and labor. 40. The several ages of human life. 41. The moral uses of the seasons.

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